Making Thought Visible: Colour in the Writings of Virginia Woolf, Dorothy Richardson, Samuel Beckett and T. S. Eliot

Amanda Marie Dackombe

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis explores colour as a philosophical means of transit between literature and the visual arts. I explore a new way of thinking about the self and about thought, developing the significance of colour alongside, and internal to, modes of representation in the modernist movement. The interaction of art and literature is crucial to much debate on modernist aesthetics. Developing the debate into the history of colour phenomena, I argue that colour allows a philosophical inflection to certain clichés (such as stream-of-consciousness) that are attached to modernist writing. In the work of Virginia Woolf, Samuel Beckett, Dorothy Richardson and T S Eliot, I argue that the modernist preoccupation with the seeming impasse between thought and representation can be seen to be 'made visible' through the theme of colour. Colour is a vehicle through which to explore the relation between thought and perception, subject and object, and offers a new way of engagement with recent research into theoretical comparisons between thinking, writing and visual arts.

KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS

BB Virginia Woolf, 'Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown' in A Woman's Essays

FQ T S Eliot, *Four Quartets* in Collected Poems 1909-1962

M Samuel Beckett, Murphy

P Dorothy Richardson, Pilgrimage

PD Samuel Beckett, Proust and Three Dialogues with Georges Duthuit

TY Virginia Woolf, The Years

W Samuel Beckett, Watt

WL T S Eliot, *The Waste Land* in Collected Poems 1909-1962

Y Samuel Beckett, 'Yellow' in More Pricks Than Kicks

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The 'visual turn': setting colour in context in Woolf, Richardson, Beckett and Eliot

According to art historian Jacqueline Lichtenstein, colour gives to painting the means to free itself from the conditions imposed on its history by philosophical reason. Lichtenstein's scholarly study, The Eloquence of Colour: Rhetoric and Painting in the French Classical Age (1993), explores the relation of philosophical thought to painting. She addresses an intolerance of painting in the Western philosophical tradition, identified through the difficult role of colour which she sees as a tension that runs through all theories of representation. According to Lichtenstein, the confrontation between discourse and image is bound into analogical reasoning to suggest that speech is like a 'painting' of our thoughts. In this way, Lichtenstein suggests, must not thought too be like a painting — was Descartes right, she asks, in his idea that to think is to paint?

Comparisons between thinking and painting, writing and painting, word and image, have been the subject of much critical attention in recent years. Lichtenstein's approach to art can be situated within an emergent field of criticism that addresses a 'visual turn' in literary and philosophical analysis. For instance, Peter Nicholls's much cited Modernisms: A Literary Guide (1995) explores literary experimentation alongside the history of Futurism, Expressionism, Cubism, Dada and Surrealism. Wendy Steiner's The Colours of Rhetoric: Problems in the Relation between Modern Literature and Painting (1982) concentrates on the structural analogies between colour and language, following the innovations of Joyce and Mallarmé and a number of texts that bridge the gap between art and literature. Among leading theorists of visual representation, American scholar W. J. T. Mitchell's Picture Theory (1994) looks at theory as

itself a form of 'picturing' asking: What are images? How do they differ from words? Mieke Bal's recent study of Proust, The Mottled Screen: Reading Proust Visually (1997) challenges clear-cut distinctions between texts and images, suggesting the visualising potential of Remembrance of Things Past and claiming that this vast literary work cannot be confined to language alone, even though it consists exclusively of words.

Nicholls, Steiner, Mitchell and Bal make direct comparison between painting and literary texts. Yet, they do not deal with the problem of colour[1]. Lichtenstein's study, on the other hand, is primarily concerned with colour yet relates specifically to the history of painting rather than to any consideration of literature. Nevertheless, the moves she makes between thinking and language, specifically in the context of colour, are of particular relevance to this thesis. Lichtenstein writes that colour is what allows the visual "to escape the grasp of discourse"[2]. At the same time, she regards it as vital to remember that all discourse "must evoke an image"[3]. It is the tension between these two seemingly conflicting ideas — that colour allows the visual to escape the grasp of discourse, while at the same time discourse is constantly drawn back into the visual — and the relation of this philosophical conundrum to thought, that is central to the argument of this thesis. Lichtenstein establishes a place for colour in a philosophical approach to thinking. Her analysis of colour nevertheless seems unable to break from a dependency on the materiality of painting. It is here that my work is radically different. Lichtenstein claims that representation "holds a specific relation to truth, thanks to its colours, which are real"[4]. The reality or materiality of the colours, as Lichtenstein goes on to claim, "does not depend on the value of a resemblance but merely on the ontological fact of their existence"[5]. While this may

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[1] Colour Codes (1995) by Charles A. Riley includes a short section on literature and colour. However, this takes the form of a delineation of colour as system in the writings of, for instance, Proust, Joyce and A. S. Byatt. Riley's study is not a philosophical approach to colour in literature but, more, establishes particular writers as 'colourists'.

[2] Jacqueline Lichtenstein, The Eloquence of Colour: Rhetoric and Painting in the French Classical Age, (University of California Press, 1993), p. 6.

[3] Ibid., p. 30.

[4] Ibid., p. 132.

[5] Ibid., p. 132.

hold true for painting, this thesis will subject colour to scrutiny in the light of less tangible methods in which though can be seen to be made visible. In the writers considered here, I establish an argument in which the materiality of colour is drawn into a philosophical premise of uncertainty. From here, I argue that colour is a means through which to address the ontological questions that can be seen to emerge in my chosen writers.

The interaction of art and literature is crucial to much debate on modernist aesthetics. Developing the debate into the history of colour phenomena, I will argue that colour allows a philosophical inflection to certain clichés (such as stream-of-consciousness) that are attached to modernist writing. I explore a new way of thinking about the self and about thought, developing the significance of colour alongside, and internal to, modes of representation in the modernist movement. In the work of Virginia Woolf, Samuel Beckett, Dorothy Richardson and T S Eliot, I will argue that the modernist preoccupation with the seeming impasse between thought and representation can be seen to be 'made visible' through the theme of colour. Ideas about consciousness are rendered complex. There is an evanescence to 'thought made visible' which brings into play aspects of colour that even the visual cannot represent.

In my chapter on Woolf I explore the ways in which, as I see it, colour upsets the neutrality of disparate minds and memories that are crucial to her formation of character and individual consciousness. This takes the form of a borderline experience between sleeping/waking, life/death and which emerges from a complex engagement with Roger Fry and Post-Impressionism. My chapter on Beckett explores the creative predicament and its means of expression. My findings claim for Beckett's writing a coloured and 'hallucinatory' quality — or 'metaphor for the lost object' — that can be set in dialogue with Beckett's philosophical response to Dutch brother-artists Geer and Bram Van Velde and Proust's voluntary and involuntary memory. My reading of Richardson develops through a reading of Walter Benjamin on childhood perception. I argue that through the theme of colour Richardson makes visible the transformative potential of thinking that for her is a model of writing. Alongside Benjamin, I introduce Lyotard's writings on Freud and dream work as a way of refiguring Richardson's

psychic landscape into 'dreamscape' in which a particular form of thinking is 'made visible'. In each of these writers a notion of 'unspeakable' elements of experience is explored in relation to thought processes, the creative predicament and ontological doubt. My final chapter draws out mystical references and implications in Woolf, Richardson, Beckett and Eliot to show how colour acts as an interface between the limitations of writing and unspeakable elements of experience that can be seen to be located within its texture. It is the links that can be made from here to an understanding of creativity as a form of 'vision' — rooted in personal and cultural memory that extends beyond 'the spiritual' or strictly religious boundaries with which 'vision' is most often associated — that forms the concluding remarks of my thesis.

The central premise of this thesis is that colour 'makes thought visible'. The seeds of this possibility are traceable in other writers of the modernist period. For instance, in Conrad's preface to The Nigger of the Narcissus (1898), he writes that his task is to achieve "by the power of the written word to make you hear, to make you feel [...] to make you *see*"[6]. The senses — of which colour plays a vital role in perception — are what will "reveal the substance of [art's] truth — disclose its inspiring secret"[7]. In Heart of Darkness (1902), Conrad again expresses this desire in colour terms: Marlow's tackling of "a darkness"[8] can only be achieved, he writes, in one place: "I was going into the yellow. Dead in the centre"[9]. If in the first example Conrad is searching for "truth"[10] made visible (the job of the writer, as he claims, is to make you '*see*') then in the second citation he would appear to be attributing such a possibility to the theme of colour or, more specifically, yellow. Nevertheless, while Conrad's use of colour is enigmatic, he can be seen to be carrying out his own stated conviction to make the reader *see*. The effect is to use language — the language of colour — in a painterly way, one that makes concrete and gives to colour a specific place and role in the picture: an attempt to reveal what colour can say about visibility and invisibility in a way that is usually reserved for the painterly relationship between thinking and

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[6] Joseph Conrad, The Nigger of the Narcissus, (Collins, 1968), p.23.
[7] Ibid., p. 23.
[8] Joseph Conrad, Heart of Darkness, (Penguin, 1989; first publ. 1902), p. 36.
[9] Ibid., p. 36.
[10] Conrad, The Nigger of the Narcissus, p. 23.

what can be represented in coloured form on the canvas. In contrast, in the writings of Woolf, Beckett, Richardson and Eliot, I will show that colour concretises itself in a wholly different form to that which is made visible in painting. An altogether different set of connections distinguishes colour in their writings from Conrad's given aim to make the reader "see"[11].

Conrad calls on yellow as a place of darkness through which an attempt is made to see beyond invisibility: "into the yellow. Dead in the centre"[12]. A yellow hue and its position between light and dark is central to much of the analysis in this thesis. Yellow is a familiar hue in modernist aesthetics. For instance, the fin de siècle saw the publication of *The Yellow Book* (first published in 1894), a journal intended to promote a particular aesthetic and representing a sudden break with the past. Anticipated as new and daring, it signals the arrival of modernity in periodical literature. Yet, although hailed as wicked and decadent, Oscar Wilde exposes the superficiality of the journal during his trial for indecency calling *The Yellow Book* "horrid", "loathsome", "dull" and "worst of all — not yellow at all"[13]. Other writers of the period select yellow as a colour through which the unsayable finds expression. For instance, just prior to publication of *The Yellow Book*, Charlotte Perkins Gilman published her short story The Yellow Wallpaper (1892). The tale portrays a woman in post-natal instability verging on madness. Forbidden to work or write she suffers from hallucination and eventual breakdown. Virginia Woolf's short story 'The New Dress' (1926)[14] is about a 'pale yellow' frock that leads its owner, Mabel Waring, to compare her life to that of a drowning fly and the process towards death. Stevie Smith's idiosyncratic Novel on Yellow Paper (1936) portrays the experiences of a secretary who types yellow "for her own pleasure"[15] and as a means to escape the mundanity of her existence. While *The Yellow Book*

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[11] Ibid., p. 23.
[12] Conrad, Heart of Darkness, p. 36.
[13] Cited in Stanley Weintraub, ed., The Yellow Book: Quintessence of the Nineties, (New York: Anchor Books, Doubleday & Co, 1964), p. xvi.
[14] This is an approximate date; 'The New Dress' was written in between Mrs Dalloway and To The Lighthouse.
[15] Stevie Smith, Novel on Yellow Paper or Work It Out for Yourself, (London: Virago, 1993; first publ. London: Jonathan Cape, 1936), p. 15.

appears to be devoted to outward show and, on this premise, to restate Wilde, is in fact "not yellow at all"[16], in Perkins-Gilman, Woolf and Smith, what is apparent is an inwardness or psychological aspect that is related to this particular hue[17]. However, one of the things that will emerge in this thesis is the way in which the link between colour and interiority is not reserved for the woman writer (the above examples are, of course, all taken from women's literature of the period). In Beckett and Eliot, just as in Woolf and Richardson, colour can be seen to be central to aspects of self and experience deemed 'unspeakable' while at the same time operating on the level of a philosophical approach to subject and object relations. The unspeakable finds expression in my chosen writers as a visual and coloured form that moves both towards materiality and concreteness while at the same time inviting analysis of something more usually associated with hallucination, dream experience, memory and fantasy.

It is from this starting point — where colour can be seen as a pivot between material and immaterial qualities of the writing — that this thesis will develop two pathways to explore what colour can say about thought and modes of consciousness. In Woolf and Richardson, I will explore colour as bringing to the forefront of the writing a hidden kernel of thought made visible. Against stream-of-consciousness and the threat of the dissolution of selfhood — two dominant ways of conceptualising selfhood in modernist writing — colour can be seen to force a philosophical confrontation that disregards the impasse between such antagonistic models of self. In Woolf and Richardson I introduce a psychobiographical dimension as well as a philosophical one. Likewise, in Beckett and Eliot, I will argue that colour introduces, or is the pathway into, a biographical element of their writing that makes complex the formal experimentation with language that is central to their work. A repeatedly concretised presence unsettles the terrain of both Beckett's and Eliot's writing and can be explored in such a way that makes valid a dialogue with psychoanalysis. Nevertheless, what becomes apparent through the introduction of thinkers such as Wilfred Bion, Melanie Klein and Abraham and Torok is that the

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[16] Cited in Stanley Weintraub, ed., The Yellow Book: Quintessence of the Nineties, p. xvi.
[17] Henry James's psychological story *'The Beast In The Jungle'* (1903) consists of seven sections each printed in a different colour to reflect the emotional theme of the section — yellow is noticeable by its absence.

creative power of Beckett's and Eliot's writing is such that psychoanalytic models are at the same time thrown out as insufficient to unpack the frames of reference that can be seen to emerge.

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A theoretical overview

In the history of art the role played by colour, generally speaking, is almost always contrasted with form. At the turn of the century colour was to provide the spearhead for non-representational art; a belief in the autonomy of colour generated the idea that colour, unlike drawing, is unteachable. However, it is colour's dual condition as primary and secondary, as form and content, that makes uncertain its status and final classification. Colour stakes its claim as both original and universal. While subjective judgement gives rise to colours often termed physiological or psychological, at the same time the chromatic spectrum dispenses colours termed physical — what the perceiving subject tries to verify as a synthesis and objectification of reality. Between these poles different versions of colours become abstracted from lived experience. Between colour as material and colour as sensation and sign a principle of 'uncertainty' emerges.

Goethe's seminal Theory of Colours (1840) is a subjective, mystical study that describes the production of colour.[18] At issue for Goethe is whether colour is a property of the object (as according to Aristotle); a property of light; or a condition which produces in us the 'sensation' of

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[18] For a more recent (and, similarly) mystical study of the production of colour see Manlio Brusatin, A History of Colours, trans. Robert H Hopche and Paul Schwartz, (Boston & London: Shambhala, 1991).

this or that colour. His claim is that circumscribed objects must be 'displaced' by refraction in order to exhibit an appearance of colour. Light and its absence are necessary to colour production: "The eye sees no form, inasmuch as light, shade and colour together constitute that which to our vision distinguishes object from object, and the parts of each object from each other. From these three, light, shade and colour, we construct the visible world"[19]. Subjectively produced colours and physical phenomena are detectable qualitatively by observation. Goethe argues against Newton's account of the production of colour as an optical effect that triggers sensation in the brain. Against Newton's discoveries, Goethe accuses physics of mistaking an incidental result for an elemental principle and suggests that a theory of colours — of subjective colour phenomena — can be investigated quite independently of Newtonian optics and its reliance upon the laws of mathematics.[20] Goethe sees the job of the philosopher as that of keeping the theory of colours distinct from mathematics: "From the philosopher, we believe we merit thanks for having traced the phenomena of colours to their first sources, to the circumstances under which they simply appear and are, and beyond which no further explanation respecting them is possible"[21]. Yet insofar as Goethe relies on the eye as a sufficient tool for the study of colour phenomena, from his Theory of Colours a principle of uncertainty emerges. Does colour only exist if we can see it?

At stake in the disagreement between Newton and Goethe is whether colour is a property of objects or impressions. There is a basic concern that crosses scientific and creative discourses which focuses on the nature of subject and object relations and the relation of thought and perception. In an article published in the *New York Review of Books*, 'The Case of the Colourblind Painter', Oliver Sacks and Robert Wasserman address Goethe's argument with science:

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[19] Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Theory of Colours, trans. Charles Lock Eastlake, (Cambridge, Massachusetts & London: The M. I. T. Press, 1997; first publ. London: John Murray, 1840), pp. lii-liii.
[20] Newton's discovery in 1665 that light as it passes through a prism produces a spectrum of colours, set the stage to reject the earlier Aristotelian view that colour is a property of objects. The subsequent (and extreme) view that colour is a property of light was based on Newton's discoveries (although he himself did not share it). Newton posited that there are no colours in the external world but wavelengths of light through which brain cells generate colour: "rays, properly expressed, are not coloured. There is nothing else in them but a certain power or disposition which so conditions them that they produce in us the sensation of this or that colour" (cited in introduction to Goethe's Theory of Colours, p. vii).
[21] Goethe, Theory of Colours, p. lviii.

Goethe thought (mistakenly) that Newton had reduced colour to the purely physical, and reacted by elevating it to the purely mental [..] Goethe's fear that science might reduce the richly coloured world of living reality to a gray nullity is expressed in the famous lines from *Faust*: "Gray, dear friend, is all theory / And green is the golden tree of life." One has a shadow of this fear when Land and Zeki say, in effect, "colour is a computation," and seem to reduce colour to something colourless in the depths of the visual cortex[22]

The article continues:

> Colour is this, but it is infinitely more; it is taken to higher and higher levels, admixed inseparably with all our visual memories, images, desires, expectations, until it becomes an integral part of ourselves [...] It is not clear that the experience, the phenomenon of colour can even be explained (or explained away) by physiology or science: it retains a mystery[23]

The idea that colour "becomes an integral part of ourselves"[24] as a phenomenon that might be beyond being explained, or, more alarmingly, of being "explained away"[25] is central to this thesis. As Sacks and Wasserman point out in Goethe's dispute with Newton, the uncertainty, or mischief, of colour is that it cannot be reduced to "the purely physical"[26] or to the "purely mental"[27]. However, while for Sacks and Wasserman this leads colour into the place of 'mystery' — of unexplained phenomenon — this thesis will firmly establish colour within a specific, careful and precise discourse of philosophical uncertainty in which thought and selfhood is focused.

The dispute between colour's status as primarily physical or mental continues into the 19th and

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[22] Oliver Sacks and Robert Wasserman, 'The Case of the Colourblind Painter', in *New York Review of Books*, 19 November 1987, p. 32.
[23] Ibid., p. 32.
[24] Ibid., p. 32.
[25] Ibid., p. 32.
[26] Ibid., p. 32.
[27] Ibid., p. 32.

20th centuries and is there again in the opposition between Ruskin and Fry. Fry's 'significant form'[28], or purity of form, stands in stark contrast to the aesthetic position championed by Ruskin. Fry is famous for his championing of Post-Impressionism and an aesthetic 'state of mind'. His concern is that art offers a 'special kind' of experience and he puts forward a view as to how or whether this experience is achievable. The crucial factor of his argument is that "our reaction to works of art is a reaction to a relation and not to sensations or objects or persons or events"[29]. For Fry, "emotional reactions are not about sensations"[30] but linked to a Kantian notion of our ability to cognise. Agreeable sensations form the very texture of works of art. Art can only try to be a representation: it belongs to the realm of the imagination and, as such, is distinguished from actual life. The imaginative life is able to present ordinary life much more clearly to consciousness. Art is separated from actual life by "the absence of responsive action"[31] that implies (as for Ruskin) "moral responsibility"[32]. Art speaks for itself. Fry defines the formal qualities of Post-Impressionist as aiming "not at illusion, but at reality"[33]. He argues that this is achieved "above all, by an entirely new use of colour"[34].

In contrast to Fry, Ruskin argues a theory played out literally among the material and physiological aspects of visual experience and conditions of perception; the eye is privileged. In a commentary on Proust's reading of Ruskin, Richard Macksey claims that what Proust admires in the English critic is his respect for the preciseness of vision and his search for artistic truth that insists on the priority of observed impressions, of the 'literal' and the 'concrete'. Ruskin's theory of aesthetic perception (which descends from his analysis of Turner's perceptual 'impressionism') is one in which the artist's act of seeing takes precedence over any received ideas or scientific

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[28] Clive Bell stresses the role of colour to significant form. In his essay 'The Aesthetic Hypothesis', he writes: "the distinction between form and colour is an unreal one; you cannot conceive a colourless line or a colourless space" ['The Aesthetic Hypothesis' in Modern Art and Modernism: A Critical Anthology, ed. Francis Frascina & Charles Harrison, (Paul Chapman Publishing, 1982), p. 69.

[29] Roger Fry, 'Some Questions on Aesthetics' in Transformations: Critical and Speculative Essays on Art, (Chatto & Windus, 1926), p. 3.

[30] Ibid., p. 3.

[31] Roger Fry, 'An Essay in Aesthetics' in Vision and Design, (Chatto & Windus, 1929), p. 20.

[32] Ibid., p. 27.

[33] Roger Fry, 'The French Post-Impressionists', in Modern Art and Modernism: A Critical Anthology, (eds.) Francis Frascina & Charles Harrison, (Paul Chapman Publishing Ltd., 1982), p. 90.

[34] Ibid., p. 90.

description. Ruskin claims that "a faithful study of colour will always give power over form, though the most intense study of form will give no power over colour"[35]. In a section of Modern Painters entitled 'The Sanctity of Colour', we find Ruskin's famous illustration — "the man who can see all the greys, and reds, and purples in a peach, will paint the peach right round, and rightly altogether; but the man who has only studied its roundness, may not see its purples and greys, and if he does not, will never get it to look like a peach"[36] — is Ruskin's 'proof' that colour is a more reliable key to the perception of the visible world than are other physical characteristics. The intention here is to confirm colour as the most dependable index of form. Yet this statement could be read as saying the opposite of what it means. Rather than confirming colour as the most dependable index, the inability of form to gain power over colour in fact suggests colour's enigma, more its refusal to be contained, certain, verifiable.

Between the positioning of colour within Fry's aesthetic 'state of mind' and Ruskin's privileging of the eye, an element of uncertainty emerges. To turn to more recent theoretical debate, art historians Jean Louis Schefer and Stephen Bann each specifically address the role of colour in this dynamic. I want to further contextualise the 'uncertainty of colour' through a reading of two particular works: Schefer's 'What Are Red Things' (1990) in The Enigmatic Body (1995) and Stephen Bann's 'The Colour in the Text: Ruskin's Basket of Strawberries' in The Ruskin Polygon: Essays on the Imagination of John Ruskin (1982). Schefer offers a historical and ideological model in which the relation of viewer to viewed is drawn into the history of the viewing subject. Bann's essay likewise engages with this dynamic but follows a psychoanalytic pathway. Ruskin's personal history breaks into his critical writings and into the frame of J M W Turner's paintings (the subject of much of his writings).

Writing on the visual arts, Schefer's work attempts to understand a moment in which colour works as paradox to both evoke and annul the spectator's lived experience — one that can be

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[35] John Ruskin, Modern Painters, A Volume of Selections, IV, Section 43, (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons (1915), p. 235.
[36] Ibid., p. 235.

rethought as a stabilising moment. Important to Schefer is not so much the particular art objects about which he writes, but rather the registration of the very complexity, even instability of his encounters with them. Intrinsic to Schefer's theoretical framework is the incorporation of a personal history into both the artwork and his encounter with it, a move that re-articulates the relation between the text as painting and the text as writing and, as Paul Smith (Schefer's editor and translator) writes, gives a historical sense of ideological and intellectual demands that is a "history of the self, the viewing subject"[37].

Writing in the 1960s, Schefer collaborated with the *Tel Quel* group. His early work is in dialogue with structuralism and tries to account for the neglect of colour within perspectival systems and within the theory of painting. Developing out of a first semiological approach, his later work analyses colour as construct that emerges from the encounter between object and subject, between a painting and its viewing, a text and its reading — referred to by Paul Smith as *the enigmatic body* and as a fantasy of Schefer's reading, a "particular fantasy, a fantasy of something that Schefer proposes is in fact absent from the objects viewed or read"[38]. An enigmatic part of selfhood — what Schefer calls "the unknown centre of ourselves"[39] — "has been disinherited, or hidden, in an attempt to represent, rationalise and regulate. By writing this into what he refers to as a commutational moment, Schefer voices a moment that relies on an intertextual field, a field in which the visual object and its readings exist within a historical context but yet imports anachronistic elements.

Colour is a vital element of Schefer's commutational moment and operates on a series of conceptual levels in his writing. To begin with, the causal elements of colour, colour's production

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[37] Jean Louis Schefer, The Enigmatic Body: Essays On the Arts, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. xi. The space that Schefer identifies between writing and viewing is comparable to Woolf's response to Fry in which she says: "he seems to have an inexhaustible capacity for sensation; until at last, whether we see the picture itself, or only what he sees, there is nothing for it but to drop the book and take the next omnibus to the National Gallery, there to gratify the desire for seeing". (Woolf, Roger Fry: A Biography, (London: Hogarth Press, 1940; 1991), p. 228.) I discuss this citation in my chapter on Woolf. The difference is that Schefer more purposively problematises this relation.

[38] Ibid., p. ix.

[39] Ibid., p. x.

one might say, reappear in the shaping of a history of ideas and cannot be left out from articulation of the mythologizing of particular colours (for instance in religious iconography). In principle, such an encounter may not raise objections. But in practice, and where this leads for Schefer, is to his own myth, a myth that displaces a previous 'understanding' with "another, more 'mythological' one"[40]. Schefer's introduction of 'his own myth' appears to suggest an unspeakable or unknowable realm of the self. Thus, what I understand him to mean is that we each bring an essentially unknowable or enigmatic component of selfhood to our encounters with art objects. The nature of Schefer's attempt to reintroduce the object into its text reintroduces the object into a personal history that is not fully available to the knowing subject. The self, the viewing subject, then becomes part of 'the myth'. Colour's formal and mythical possibility conjures physical and psychological response. It is in this sense of the philosophical uncertainty about colour that in Schefer's work myths come to be formed as "a product of colour's trouble, its 'mischief'"[41].

Schefer's articulation of the relation of viewer to viewed introduces 'his own myth', or enigmatic component of self, into the art objects he encounters. Bann's essay on Ruskin is different insofar as he does not suggest a 'mythical' resonance in his own reading of Ruskin, but brings a psychoanalytic reading to Ruskin's encounters with the paintings of J. M. W. Turner. Ruskin draws attention to colour, the most abstract visible signs, as those which offer the key to the most concrete certainties about the visible world. Yet, at the same time, Ruskin is stuck with an inability to develop a concrete experience of colour in the visual arts. If we move from Schefer's sense of the complexity and instability of his encounters with artworks into Bann's essay on Ruskin, then this instability is indeed crucial to our understanding of art objects as such and to critical writings about art.

Bann engages in a psychoanalytic account of Ruskin's encounters with Turner's paintings. He argues that Ruskin flits between four variants of red — purple, scarlet, crimson, vermilion.

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[40] Ibid., p. 157.
[41] Ibid., p. 157.

According to Bann, the hue that is missing is 'rose'. He traces a psychoanalytic pathway that links this 'missing' hue to Rose La Touche, the young girl to whom Ruskin formed his most passionate attachment and of whom he writes in Praeterita. At work in Ruskin, he argues, is a kind of colour code in which the terms are "not conventional but hermetic. Colour is not so much denotative as richly connotative"[42]. A psychological dimension of Ruskin's use of colour emerges and which can be traced back and related to a particular event with Rose La Touche. The associative reds (purple, scarlet, crimson, vermilion) Bann interprets as emerging from repressed emotion relating to the event of a particular 'red' that is traceable to biographical elements of Ruskin's life and to "determinations exercised by the images of Ruskin's life: the spitting of blood, the basket of strawberries and the rose with no shadow"[43]. Ruskin's use of colour introduces "the return of the repressed"[44] and its possible contribution to what Bann sees as "the imperfect state of our knowledge"[45] with regard to colour relations in art.

From here, Bann argues that Ruskin offers a vital key to the spilling of colour from its traditional role in perspectival systems. Ruskin fails to develop a coherent theory of representation within which colour would have its allotted and determined place. Bann explores this notion via a discernment of the productivity of colour as opposed to its merely distinctive and differential properties. The way in which Ruskin 'produces' colour in Turner's paintings ("a good red and a bad red — a paradigm of purity against the threat of impurity"[46]) reflects a conflict in Ruskin's usage of colour terms and "shows how the problem of colour is indissolubly linked with oral and libidinal bases of perception"[47]. Accordingly, the concrete certainties that Ruskin claims for

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[42] Stephen Bann, 'The Colour in the Text: Ruskin's Basket of Strawberries' in The Ruskin Polygon: Essays on the Imagination of John Ruskin, edited by John Dixon Hunt & Faith M Holland, (Manchester University Press, 1982), p. 127.
[43] Ibid., p. 132.
[44] Ibid., p. 125; p. 133.
[45] Ibid., p. 133.
[46] Ibid., p. 128.
[47] Bann cites Ruskin directly in this context: "Colour, as stated in the text, is the purifying or sanctifying element of material beauty. [...] So it is with the type of Love — colour": Bann, 'The Colour in the Text: Ruskin's Basket of Strawberries' in The Ruskin Polygon: Essays on the Imagination of John Ruskin, p. 125.

colour in the visible world are rendered uncertain through the way he experiences such 'certainties'. The manifold meanings of red in Ruskin's texts point to a biographical history. There is a psychological dimension to Ruskin's use of colour terms that refers back to a personal history, to Ruskin the man and not simply Ruskin the critic[48]. Ruskin's shifting of colour descriptions accorded to the manifold meanings of reds is not an unambiguous working distinction but, Bann claims, bears "a burden beyond description"[49]. Ruskin says that Turner's work "was the true image of his own mind"[50]. Yet, another ambiguity presents itself: is the critic referring to Turner's inner vision made concrete on the canvas, or to Ruskin's own image that, as Bann suggests, draws his writings on Turner into a psychobiographical dialogue between Ruskin and Rose La Touche?

In the chapters that follow, the work of Schefer and Bann is both crucial to my argument that colour 'makes visible' philosophical problems in Woolf, Richardson, Beckett and Eliot and to the pathway that I follow in relation to colour's unsettling of personal histories and the workings of memory. Although Schefer's model suggests the underlying presence of 'my own myth' within the readings I have undertaken, my emphasis will be more, following Bann, on the personal myth of my chosen writers and the place of colour within it. In Woolf, personal allusions to the writer are made through a coloured and borderline zone in which life and death oscillate. In Richardson, it is through colour that memory and personal history can be seen to interrupt the

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[48] Ruskin's description of his first sight of the Alps would seem to confirm Bann's reading: "there was no thought in any of us for a moment of their being clouds. They were clear as crystal, sharp on the pure horizon sky, and already tinged with rose by the sinking sun. Infinitely beyond all that we had ever thought or dreamed, — the seen walls of the lost Eden could not have been more beautiful to us; nor more awful, round heaven, the walls of sacred Death" [Ruskin, The Complete Works of John Ruskin, ed E. T. Cook & Alexander Wedderburn, Library Edition, 39 vols. (London: George Allen, 1903-1912), XXXV, p. 116]. Rather than a life oppressed by clouds, there is an unmistakable gesture here towards loss. The "seen walls of the lost Eden" are rose coloured — a both beautiful and sacred representation of Death. It is of further note here that colour plays a crucial role in the link that Ruskin makes between aesthetics and divinity: "already tinged with rose [...]the seen walls of the lost Eden [...] sacred Death". Ruskin's description of his first sight of the Alps would appear to play between a moment of Proustian involuntary memory and Bann's reading of the return of the repressed: "There was no thought in any of us for a moment of their being clouds. They were clear as crystal [...] already tinged with *rose* [...] the seen walls of the lost Eden". There is an unmistakable gesture here towards the lost love that Bann identifies in Rose La Touche and her haunting of Ruskin's critical writings.

[49] Bann, 'The Colour in the Text: Ruskin's Basket of Strawberries' in The Ruskin Polygon: Essays on the Imagination of John Ruskin, p. 129.

[50] John Ruskin, The Complete Works of John Ruskin, ed. E. T. Cook & Alexander Wedderburn, Library Edition, 39 vols. (London: George Allen, 1903-12), [7.422], p. 192.

transformative consciousness with which Henderson is endowed. In Beckett and Eliot, personal histories emerge more strongly and develop the theme of death introduced via Woolf and, to a lesser extent, Richardson.

The making visible of psychobiographical elements is one pathway of enquiry that I will follow. The other is a philosophical analysis of the problem of unrepresentability as a central concern for each of these writers. In Woolf and Richardson, colour opens up a gap between objects portrayed and their representation, thus echoing an uncertainty about the system of representation they are working within. In Richardson, this uncertainty is located in the transformative potential of writing to make visible an unknown core of selfhood. In Woolf, it appears more in the 'gaps' in her writing and their relation to the shift from Impressionism to Post-Impressionism, specifically the latter's self-conscious awareness that what we can see is not clearly visible on the surface but, through colour, makes visible that which would otherwise remain walled up in the separate life of each consciousness. Unrepresentability in Beckett takes the form of a philosophical dialogue with the 'anxiety' which stems from his conviction that "expression is an impossible act"[51]. Through an analysis of the 'hallucinatory' potential of colour, my reading of Beckett argues that anxiety is made visible and, as such, contradicts Beckett's sense of his own failure to express. His work is drawn back into the affirmative status that he gives to artists Geer and Bram Van Velde. In my final chapter, the question of unrepresentability is discussed in relation to mysticism, made complex through the repetitive pull towards personal and cultural memory.

Precisely because of colour's uncertain epistemological status, colour has the power to compel the most difficult aspects of a personal history to the surface of writing. However, as I have stressed, the potentially psychological weight of colour is continually drawn back into philosophical uncertainty in which colour is central. Colour's ambiguous role within the literary texts considered here invites a complex dialogue of visual and text, form and content, subject

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[51] Samuel Beckett, Disjecta: Miscellaneous Writings and a Dramatic Fragment, (John Calder, 1983), p. 143.

and object. In this way, what emerges is a principle of uncertainty in the capacity of writing to evoke experience — a capacity that modernist writing contests but to which, I will argue, it also adheres.

Chapter 2: Borderlines: Colour as an Approach to Subject and Object Relations in Virginia Woolf

The first Post-Impressionist show to be held in London is arranged by Roger Fry in 1910 and is the year famously reflected upon by Woolf as a moment when "human character changed"[1]. In the many commentaries on this moment in Woolf, very little attention has been paid to the place assigned to colour in this transition. Woolf's statement is made in an essay entitled 'Mr Bennett and Mrs *Brown*' and it seems to me that colour is central to the argument she is making about the literary tradition and her modernist agenda as a writer. Taking Woolf's choice of *Brown* as a specific and philosophical relation to colour rather than as an arbitrary naming device, this chapter will argue that colour plays a crucial role in Woolf's preoccupation with the formation of character and modernist concerns about the tension, or impasse, between thought and representation.[2]

In Woolf's much cited essay about the milieu of 1910 she writes:

> I let my Mrs Brown slip through my fingers. I have told you nothing whatever about her [...] I knew that if I began describing the cancer and the calico, my Mrs Brown, that vision to which I cling though I know no way of imparting it to you, would have been dulled and tarnished and vanished for ever (*BB*, 82)

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[1] Virginia Woolf, 'Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown' in A Woman's Essays, (ed.) Rachel Bowlby, (London: Penguin, 1992), p. 70, (hereafter cited as *BB*). (Essay written in 1923; first publ. under the title 'Character in Fiction' in the *Criterion*, July 1924; first published as 'Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown', London: Hogarth Press in 1924).

[2] Jane Goldman, in The Feminist Aesthetics of Virginia Woolf: Modernism, Post-Impressionism and the Politics of the Visual, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), has a chapter entitled 'Colour had Meaning in 1910'. Her reading links Woolf's use of purple, white and green to feminist politics and the militant cause, exploring tropes of light and colour in relation to iconographic 'colourist' and suffragist traditions and contexts. Goldman links colourist aesthetics in Woolf's work (through Vanessa Bell) to a feminist aesthetic in which the suffrage movement is central: "to produce a politicized deployment of colour" (p. 115). In this chapter, I will be arguing against a reading of Woolf as 'colourist', rather seeing Woolf's use of colour as a specific and philosophical approach to subject and object relations.

The vision to which Woolf clings is not visible on the surface and creates problems for any form of representation that aims at realist description. That which is fixed about Mrs Brown eludes the form of expression at Woolf's disposal. The choice of naming, Mrs *Brown*, I will argue, is crucial to Woolf's presentation of a perhaps universally familiar character who yet manages to withdraw from the page with all her mystery intact. As Fry articulates Post-Impressionist technique, what we can see is not clearly visible on the surface. Woolf's like investment in colour (not just as a naming device) displaces a more traditional system of figuration, or, characterisation. The character of Mrs Brown is both entirely ordinary and entirely hidden. Using *brown* as signifier, Woolf embraces the Post-Impressionist 'gap' — here between character and its representation — to criticise the traditional novel strategies deployed by Arnold Bennett, H G Wells and Galsworthy. (Likewise in 'Modern Fiction'[3] Woolf outlines her dissatisfaction with the novel form as they define it.) In her quarrel with realism Woolf sets out to demonstrate the futility of any attempt to replicate, through description, the essential attributes of character. 'Brown' is cleverly chosen to set in motion a means of transit between Woolf's impression of "one of those" (*BB*, 72) old ladies, endlessly displaced, and the modulations or sensations of the woman's character which cannot be known but cannot be subordinated.

Brown is an amalgam of various colours produced by low intensity light. While also the colour of earth (surface as opposed to the infinity of sea or sky) it is also interestingly described in 1926 by the philosopher Oswald Spengler as "the true colour of the soul"[4]. Brown is outside of the spectrum: "a pure brown light is outside the possibilities of Nature"[5] he writes — and has the capacity to take the viewer out of Nature into an alien realm. Spengler dedicates a whole chapter in The Decline of the West: Form and Actuality (1926) to the history of Western art, principally in terms of colour ('The Arts of Form'). His review culminates in a tribute to the metaphysical force of Rembrandt's *atelierbraun* (studio brown) as the true colour of the soul — an "enigmatic

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[3] This essay appears in Virginia Woolf, The Common Reader: First Series, (ed.) Andrew McNeillie, (London: Hogarth Press, 1984; first publ. London: Hogarth Press, 1925).
[4] Cited in Charles A Riley, Colour Codes: Modern Theories of Colour, (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1995), p. 46.
[5] Ibid., p. 46.

brown [...] the unrealest colour that there is".[6] Likewise, Woolf's sketch of an elusive (while ostensibly familiar) character dispels the myth of a 'knowable' essence of an old lady sitting in the corner of a train carriage. Mrs Brown is a response to Woolf's dissatisfaction with narrative forms that even attempt such impossibility. Woolf reads Bennett as asserting that "it is only if the characters are real that the novel has any chance of surviving" (*BB*, 75). She responds with the following question: "But, I ask myself, what is reality? And who are the judges of reality?" (*BB*, 75).

Woolf's question locates a familiar modernist critique of the I' as stable and identifiable ego. In this chapter, I will argue that by analysing the way in which colour works in Woolf's writing, we can understand her famous critique of the 'I' outside the more familiar theoretical binary of 'dissolution' against the 'ego' which has often been used to read her. Woolf's relation to colour is engendered with high stakes for the subject. Woolf's complaint against the chief practitioners of Edwardian fiction, namely Bennett, Galsworthy and Wells, was that their realistic, externalised descriptions of character attached to the "thingness"[7] of life and failed to penetrate to its essential reality. The inner light of which Kandinsky writes, the spirit of things, is subordinated to material reality. In contrast, and what is vital to Mrs Brown, is the embracing of philosophical uncertainty. On Woolf's model, all speech is a question asking 'who am I?'; the self as yet unknown is foreshadowed by the unknown within the self. Woolf's choice of brown (as "the unrealest colour there is"[8]) offers a model of selfhood, I will argue, that bears the weight of, while exceeding, such a struggle between stable ego and dissolution of self. In the representative strategies of Bennett, Galsworthy and Wells colour is a property of visible objects, a reflection and property of external reality. An enigmatic element to selfhood — that which is not apparent in the field of vision — is disinherited in such efforts to represent, rationalise and legitimate 'character'. Against the strictly realist observations of these writers, Woolf sets Mrs *Brown* as

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[6] Ibid., p. 49.
[7] Woolf's essay is discussed by Peter Stansky in On or About December 1910: Early Bloomsbury and its Intimate World, (Cambridge, Mass. & London: Harvard University Press, 1996), p. 139.
[8] Cited in Riley, Colour Codes, p. 49.

elusive yet eternal "human nature" (*BB*, 80). Mrs Brown, she writes, "changes only on the surface" (*BB*, 80). There is something underneath that is eternal and immutable.

The evidence suggests that Woolf's Mrs Brown is daringly close to a literary rendering of a 'Post-Impressionist' image — her character is not clearly visible on the surface; what is knowable about Mrs Brown is only indirectly available. Post-impressionist technique, as Fry articulates it, makes visible that which lies *beneath* the veil of interpretation. It records, he says, "a positive and disinterestedly passionate state of mind. It communicates a new and otherwise unattainable experience"[9]. A similar claim is made by Cézanne (with particular reference to colour) when he writes: "To read nature is to see her, underneath the veil of interpretation, as coloured *taches* following one another according to a law of harmony. These large coloured areas can thus be analysed into modulations. Painting is recording coloured sensations" [10]. It is in a similar tone in her essay on the painter Walter Sickert, (a 'literary artist' as Woolf refers to him) that Woolf writes of a "zone of silence in the middle of every art"[11] and claims that painters "with their concentration of form and colour"[12] get closer to it[13]. That which is articulated by Fry and Cézanne as lying 'beneath' or underneath the veil of interpretation is expressed by Woolf as a 'zone of silence', or, as I will refer to it throughout this chapter, as an 'unspeakable' realm. In Woolf's writing she can be seen to address the Post-Impressionist gap between the approximation of form and appearance, thereby drawing this gap into a self-conscious awareness that what is not clearly visible on the surface is, nevertheless, crucial to an understanding of character. Such 'unspeakable' elements or modulations of character she tries to make visible through the theme of colour.

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[9] Roger Fry, 'French Post-Impressionists' in Vision and Design, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1929), p. 242.
[10] Taken from Doran, *Conversations avec Cézanne*, in John Gage, Colour and Culture: Practice and Meaning from Antiquity to Abstraction, (Thames & Hudson, 1993), p. 210.
[11] Cited in Hermione Lee, Virginia Woolf, (London: Vintage, 1997), p. 643.
[12] Cited in Lee, Virginia Woolf, p. 643.
[13] In her biography of Virginia Woolf, Hermione Lee draws attention to the friendship between Woolf and Sickert. Her essay on Sickert, she writes, used one of her favourite devices, the dinner party, as starting point and plot: "Taking off (as she so often 'took off' in conversation) from the recent introduction of three-coloured traffic lights in London, in order to ask how it is we respond to colour, she pursued her old controversy between the story-tellers and the painters. Sickert's paintings offer themselves as biographies or as novels, she said", Lee, Virginia Woolf, p. 643.

Woolf's insistence on constructing an 'unknown centre' is illustrated in her biography of Fry. She writes: "he laughed spontaneously, thoroughly, with the whole of him ... There was something stable underneath his mobility"[14]. Unwillingness to present the self in concrete images makes possible a writing that seeks to figure the contradictions between representation and the subject's process of consciousness and interpretation. Such unwillingness will not however, as is so often argued, lead to 'dissolution of selfhood' but rather towards a hidden core of unity. Woolf develops a philosophical approach to colour. Generally speaking, in Woolf's high-modernist novels such as Mrs Dalloway (1925), To The Lighthouse (1927), The Waves (1931), colour can be seen to work more as impressionism or as the stream-of-consciousness technique that is so traditionally associated with Woolf and the modernist agenda for women writers. However, I will argue that what can be seen to emerge in Woolf's late novel, The Years (1937), is an entirely 'new' use of colour to that of her earlier fictional works and which reflects the philosophical underpinning of Woolf's exploration of colour as introduced in 'Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown'.

The problem that Woolf faces — to make visible through the theme of colour something which lies *beneath* the veil of interpretation — would seem an impossible task for the writer to achieve. As I state in my introduction, Joseph Conrad's preface to The Nigger of the Narcissus draws attention to the difficult task of the writer to "make you hear, to make you feel – [...] to make you *see*"[15]. His intention is to show the written word's "vibration, its colour, its form"[16], claiming that through its movement, its form, and its colour the substance of its truth can be revealed and its inspiring secret can be disclosed. Yet in the same preface Conrad gives us a sense of the impossibility of his task. The aim of art, he says, "like life itself is obscured by mists"[17]. Michael Levenson discusses the tension at work here as "contradictory interpretations of Impressionism"[18], what he characterises as the struggle between "a precise rendering of objects and an unrepentant subjectivizing"[19]. I want to develop Levenson's critique into a reading of

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[14] Virginia Woolf, Roger Fry: A Biography, (London: Hogarth Press 1991; first publ. 1940), p. 149-150.
[15] Conrad, The Nigger of the Narcissus, p.23.
[16] Ibid., p. 23.
[17] Ibid., p. 24.
[18] Michael H Levenson, A Genealogy of Modernism, (Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 36.
[19] Ibid., p. 36.

Woolf's last novel, The Years, where a similar tension is played out. If between the 'we' of the world and the perception of objects lies the "inspiring secret"[20] of which Conrad writes ("its colour, its form [...] the substance of its truth"[21]), how does reality attain a sensible solidity that makes it seem concrete and identifiable? How is the subject, for whom reality is such a question, properly constituted? Woolf's writing locates familiar modernist concerns – critique of the 'I'; inability to close the gap between word and referent. If Conrad leaves us with ambiguity, with an irreconcilable yet inspiring secret, in the turn to Woolf is it possible to rethink this paradox in terms of an 'unspeakable' realm? That which is 'obscured by mists' in Conrad, which in other words is not clearly visible, he nonetheless tries to articulate. I will argue that Woolf, on the other hand, explores an unspeakable realm which she tries to make visible.

One of the key questions in much modernist writing is the nature of representation, real versus ideal, and the relation between subject and object. However, the role of colour in this debate remains relatively unexplored. As I have stressed in my introduction, colour holds a mischievous place in the relation between subject and object — at once oscillating within and between perception and state of mind, property of objects and impressionism. Woolf responds to the challenge posed by colour through an exploration of a 'borderline' between these binaries which emerges in her work as a point of uncertainty between sleeping and waking, birth and death, looking within and looking without. Through an engagement with colour's 'mischief', Woolf's writing asks the question whether or not writing can lay claim to the possibility of a relation between material and spiritual, real and ideal, and in this way, bring form out of formlessness. She writes: "we are the words; we are the music; we are the thing itself"[22]. On this model, it would appear that Woolf sets belief in the idea that art forms make possible the piecing together

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[20] Conrad, The Nigger of the Narcissus, p. 23.
[21] Ibid., p. 23.
[22] Virginia Woolf, 'A Sketch of the Past', in Moments of Being: Unpublished Autobiographical Writings, (ed.) Jeanne Schulkind, (London: Triad/Granada, 1978), p. 84.

of severed elements of experience. As I have already stated, I see the event of the Post-Impressionist show of 1910 — and Woolf's famous statement that human character changed in 1910 — as crucial to an understanding of the shift in colour relations that can be seen to take place in her writing. To contextualise the emergence of this moment, Woolf's use of colour needs first to be read with particular reference to Fry's ideas and the techniques used by Cézanne and other Post-Impressionist artists. The second section will give a close reading of The Years.

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Thought and consciousness: an approach to complexities of representation in painting and writing

While the influence of Fry's critical ideas on Woolf's approach to art and literature is well known, the place assigned to colour in this relationship has not been specifically addressed and seems to me to play a vital role in Woolf's writings. In her biography of Fry, Woolf draws particular attention to colour as it emerges in Fry's writing, claiming that he: "brings colour onto the page"[23]. In his theoretical essays, Fry sees Post-Impressionism as involved in the 'creation' of form rather than an attempt to imitate form in painterly fashion. He writes that Post-Impressionism creates "a purely abstract language of form"[24] in which the intention is to aim "not at illusion, but at reality"[25]. Rather than express skill or knowledge these artists seek to

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[23] Woolf, Roger Fry, p. 227.
[24] Roger Fry, 'The French Post-Impressionists', in Modern Art and Modernism: A Critical Anthology, (eds.) Frascina, Francis & Charles Harrison, Paul Chapman Publishing Ltd., 1982) p. 90.
[25] Cited in Charles Harrison, English Art and Modernism 1900-1939, (Yale University Press, 1981), p. 63.

express "certain spiritual experiences"[26]. This is achieved, Fry argues, "above all, by an entirely new use of colour"[27].

In his essay, 'Art and Life' (1917)[28], Fry initiates a going "back"[29] to the Impressionist movement of around 1870. Here he sees two distinct ideas at work: i) complete detachment of the artistic vision from the values imposed on vision by everyday life; and ii) involvement in a quasi-scientific description of new effects of atmospheric colour and atmospheric perspective, which endows painting with a quite new series of colour harmonies. Fry says the Impressionist artists "reduced the artistic vision to a continuous patchwork or mosaic of coloured patches without architectural framework or structural coherence"[30]. What is good in all of this, Fry argues, is that the Impressionist technique pushed representation to its end point: "further development was impossible"[31]. The only place to go from here is to question the concept of representation. Representational art, Fry states, is based on a pseudo-scientific assumption. Questioning its validity is the great awaited "critical point"[32] in art history. What this moment inaugurates, and what is vital for Fry, is the "re-establishment of purely aesthetic criteria in place of the criterion of conformity to appearance"[33]. Yet Fry's call for purity of form does not amount to a questioning of the artist's ability to 'represent' (for instance, in the way that this will be explored in my chapter on Beckett). Rather it is the success of Impressionist painting that creates an impasse — the culmination of an ongoing "tendency to approximate the forms of art more and more exactly to the representation of the totality of appearance"[34]. How can painting develop visual experience into a broader field of perception? Fry hails Cézanne as the antithesis of the Impressionists; as the founding father of Post-Impressionism and of the modern movement. The

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[26] Fry, 'The French Post-Impressionists', in Modern Art and Modernism: A Critical Anthology, p. 89.
[27] Ibid., p. 90.
[28] Roger Fry, Vision and Design, (London: Chatto and Windus, 1929).
[29] Fry, 'Art and Life', in Vision and Design, p. 10.
[30] Ibid., p. 11.
[31] Ibid., p. 11.
[32] Ibid., p. 11.
[33] Ibid., p. 12.
[34] Ibid., p. 11.

essential element is that art should not be limited to the recording of visual impressions, but should express emotional experiences and spiritual values. The modern artist, Fry writes, has a choice as to "whether he will *think* form [...] or merely *see* it"[35] (there are echoes here with Conrad's preface cited earlier). Impressionism in its deliberate attempt to "deconceptualise art"[36] belongs to the latter. An ability to *think* form brings expressive vigour. As in children's art: Fry says "First I think, and then I draw a line round my think"[37]. This vigour is what distinguishes Post-Impressionism from Impressionism. Something important has changed. A gap is made apparent between the object portrayed and its representation. There is a self-conscious awareness that what we can see in Post-Impressionist painting is not clearly visible on the surface of ordinary things. As philosopher Charles Taylor writes, what is represented is "something only indirectly available, something the visible object can't say itself but only nudges us towards"[38].

In 'An Essay in Aesthetics' (1909)[39] Fry outlines the elements of a painting which he regards as essential to arouse emotion. These are rhythm of line, mass, space, light and shade, and colour. Each is connected with "essential conditions of our physical existence"[40] – with the exception of colour. Colour, Fry writes, is "the only one of our elements which is not of critical or universal importance to life, and its emotional effect is neither so deep nor so clearly determined as the others"[41]: rhythm accompanies muscular activity; mass is connected to forces of gravity; spatial judgement is "universal in its application to life"[42]; light is a necessary condition of our existence. Yet colour retains an elusive quality which he fails to define. Evidently Fry is using the terms of empirical science to support his claims yet in relation to colour, on empirical grounds his argument breaks down. Fry writes of colour and light as separate elements, yet colour *is* light.

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[35] Fry, 'The Art of the Bushmen' in Vision and Design, p. 97.
[36] Ibid., p. 97.
[37] Ibid., p. 96.
[38] Charles Taylor, Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity, (Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 469.
[39] Published in Fry, Vision and Design.
[40] Fry, 'An Essay in Aesthetics', in Vision and Design, p. 34.
[41] Ibid., p. 35.
[42] Ibid., p. 34.

Further, colour has a material aspect upon which pictorial composition is dependent. It is vital to Fry's argument for purity of form to distinguish between artistic composition and what is essential to ordinary life. Post-Impressionist painters do not, as in Impressionism, show the play of natural light. Rather, as Kandinsky suggests, they seek to show an 'inner' light:

> Inner necessity is the basis of both small and great problems in painting.
> Today we are seeking the road which is to lead us away from the external to the internal basis. The spirit, like the body, can be strengthened and developed by frequent exercise: just as the body, if neglected, grows weak and finally impotent, so the spirit perishes if untended. The innate feeling of the artist is the biblical talent which must not be buried in the earth. And for this reason it is necessary for the artist to know the starting point for the exercise of his spirit.
>
> The starting point is the study of colour and its effects on men[43]

Colour (as light) explores the mysterious nature of spirit and thought. Charles Taylor, in his writings on the modern subject, says of Kandinsky that the attempt is to "forge a new language, abandoning linear and aerial perspective and making the spatial dispositions arise from the modulations of colour"[44]. Colour sensations recapture and convert into visible objects that which, as Taylor describes particularly well, would otherwise "remain walled up in the separate life of each consciousness: the vibration of appearance which is the cradle of things"[45].

The artists that Fry introduced to the British art scene in 1910 were greeted with almost universal derision and, opening on the anniversary of the Gunpowder plot, gave an increased emphasis to politics. Robert Ross, a friend of Fry's and critic for the *Morning Post* writes: "A date more favourable than the Fifth of November for revealing the existence of a widespread plot to destroy the whole fabric of European painting could hardly have been chosen".[46] Yet the derision was short-lived. In her biography of Roger Fry in 1940, Woolf writes: "It would need to-day as much more courage to denounce Cézanne, Picasso, Seurat, Van Gogh and Gauguin as it needed then to defend them. But such figures and such opinions were not available in 1910,

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[43] Wassily Kandinsky, Concerning the Spiritual in Art, (New York: George Wittenborn, inc., 1947), p. 54.
[44] Taylor, Sources of the Self, p. 468.
[45] Ibid., p. 468.
[46] Stansky, On or About December 1910; Early Bloomsbury and its Intimate World, p. 216.

and Roger Fry was left to uphold his own beliefs under a shower of abuse and ridicule"[47]. Again, in her biography of Fry, Woolf comments on Vision and Design, a collection of Fry's writings on art first published in 1920, that his writing "wakes the eye"[48] and then begins an "analysis of our sensations"[49]. What Woolf appears to be suggesting is that, in a comparable way to Fry's own account of Post-Impressionist technique, Fry's writing aims "not at illusion but at reality"[50] — not at what appears on the surface but at what might lie beneath. Expanding on her sense of what is at stake here in colour terms, she writes that Fry "brings colour onto the page, and not only colour but forms and their relations"[51]. Although Fry is writing *about* visual art, Woolf suggests that his stylistic technique gives to the reader a way of understanding that is not traditionally associated with the act of 'reading about' but with 'physically looking at' artworks. Woolf appears to be making a crucial point here — that writing can work to make visible in ways more usually associated with the visual arts. Nevertheless, at this crucial juncture, what can be seen to emerge is in fact Woolf's departure from, or critique of, Fry.

Woolf coined the phrase "new forms for our new sensations"[52] to account for what she sees as the amazing new appeal of some contemporary works and the differences in culture between one period and another. While taking up the significance of chance and newness Woolf insists that sensations should be shaped into forms: there should be continuity and stability. The power of colour that Fry grasps as a viewer of Post-Impressionist paintings is recognised by Woolf as being formally shaped into the substance of his critical writings. Woolf suggests that Fry gives to a reader a way of 'physically looking' at artworks. His writing heralds a new sensation. Yet while Fry assumes a theory of sensations Woolf recognises that it is not 'our' sensations but Fry's own of which he is writing: "he seems to have an inexhaustible capacity for sensation; until at last, whether we see the picture itself, or only what he sees, there is nothing for it but to drop the

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[47] Woolf, Roger Fry, pp. 157-159.
[48] Ibid., p. 227.
[49] Ibid., p. 227.
[50] Fry, 'The French Post-Impressionists' in Vision and Design, p. 239.
[51] Woolf, Roger Fry, p. 227.
[52] From 'Hours in a Library', in Virginia Woolf, Collected Essays II, (London: Hogarth Press, 1967), p. 39.

book and take the next omnibus to the National Gallery, there to gratify the desire for seeing"[53]. Fry's presentation generates in Woolf the uncomfortable sense of an aesthetic experience that is in some way 'infected'. Her problem appears to be one that emerges as a conflict of aesthetic reflection and subjectivism apparent in Fry's presentation. To understand this more fully, it is necessary to set Woolf's critique in the context of Fry's aesthetic as it works within the philosophical tradition of Kant.

Fry's aesthetic reflection draws from the Kantian tradition of subjective judgement in which the role of the imagination is central. Kant writes: "we do not use understanding to refer the presentation to the object so as to give rise to cognition; rather, we use imagination [...] to refer the presentation to the subject and his feeling of pleasure and displeasure"[54]. Fry's judgement is aesthetic (in the Kantian sense) to the extent that it is *a reflection* on sensations. In Kantian aesthetics, reflection is the general engagement of the possibility for relation between the faculties of the mind. Kant writes: "Fine art [...] is a way of presenting that is purposive on its own and that furthers, even though without a purpose, the culture of our mental powers to [facilitate] social communication"[55]. The artwork engages the viewer through "presentations that are ways of cognising"[56] rather than presentations that aim towards particular cognition. For Fry, as for Kant, the work of fine art has a structure which echoes, and plays into, the capacity for aesthetic reflection. The aim of art is to engage a general capacity to cognise — which any viewer possesses — leading them to resolve the presentation as knowledge. In Kant's philosophy of art, emphasis is placed on a subjectively mediated but objective aesthetics. Here, subjectivity in the artwork is concealed: "subjectivity [...] is not the aesthetic quality as such but becomes it only through objectivation"[57]. The translation from one medium to another, from the real to the ideal, is achievable through the relation that artworks offer. Woolf's reaction, while

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[53] Woolf, Roger Fry, p. 228.
[54] Immanuel Kant, The Critique of Judgement, trans. Werner S Pluhar, (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1987), Ak 203.
[55] Ibid., Ak 306.
[56] Ibid., Ak 305.
[57] Theodor Adorno, Aesthetic Theory, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor, (London: Athlone Press, 1997; first publ. 1970), p. 169.

accepting Fry's expression as capable of arousing sensation, is more problematic in the way it conceives the relation between real and ideal. The logical effect of her critique of Fry (although logical is not the right word) is to follow colour or see colour to follow writing into an unspeakable/invisible component of mind such as Woolf describes in 'Mrs Brown'. The conflict of aesthetic reflection and subjectivism apparent in Fry's presentation generates in Woolf an uncomfortable desire that can only find resolution through a change of cognition, expressed as a desire for a purely visual experience which exceeds reflection to move into an 'unspeakable' or 'invisible' realm. As Woolf makes plain in 'Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown', her own aesthetic position stresses more uncertainty than Kantian principles offer and moves into an 'unspeakable' realm that, through the theme of colour, she tries to make visible.

It is the kind of experience deemed 'unspeakable', I will argue, that disturbs Woolf's writing of The Years. In her earlier fictions such as To The Lighthouse, Mrs Dalloway and The Waves, Woolf can perhaps be said to use painterly images to create visual impressions of the secret inner life of the self. However, in The Years Woolf takes up the gauntlet to bring 'new form' to her writing. A visual and coloured component of the text, in the way of Post-Impressionist technique, introduces an unspeakable realm or realms and expresses Woolf's conflict with the order and authority of the language she is working within. The concealment of subjectivity that for Kant and Fry is objectified in the artwork has a more primitive concealment in Woolf. Subjectivity is not only problematic for forms of representation but is hidden, or unknown, to the self. For Woolf, the question seems to be more: does aesthetic emotion, that "peculiar quality of reality"[58] — expressed by Fry in relation to Post-Impressionism and aesthetic emotion as a certain "spiritual"[59] experience — lie in an unspeakable realm?

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[58] Woolf, Roger Fry, p. 229. (This is a statement made by Fry in his essay 'Retrospect' and appears in the closing paragraph on the last page of Vision and Design).
[59] Fry, 'Art and Life', in Vision and Design, p. 15.

The complexity of Woolf's position recalls the kind of "dual vision"[60] that Woolf attributes to Marcel Proust. Identifying with Proust's capacity to embrace the relation between form and colour she writes: "He searches out those *butterfly shades* to the last grain. He is as tough as cat gut and as evanescent as a *butterfly's bloom.* And he will I suppose both influence me & make me out of temper with every sentence of my own"[61] *(my emphasis).* The nature of the butterfly is to flit from flower to flower on open, brightly coloured wings. Its motion makes indistinct its colours. They cannot be clearly identified but merely tease the eye with the promise of beauty. Once the butterfly settles its wings close over the back. Thus at the moment when its shades would be clearly visible – when motion is stilled – colour disappears. Just as colour attains its identity it is suddenly and dramatically lost. The shades of meaning that Proust offers to his reader, Woolf suggests, similarly manage to escape with all their mystery intact. The sense of what is at stake for Woolf in Proust's writing — and the challenge she makes upon her own work — is mirrored in almost identical terms by the imagist poet HD:

> We have had too much consecration,
> too little affirmation,
> too much: but this, this, this
> has been proved heretical,
> too little: I know, I feel
> the meaning that words hide;
> they are anagrams, cryptograms,
> little boxes, conditioned
> to *hatch butterflies* . . . [62] *(my emphasis)*

As Proust's 'butterfly shades' make meaning evanesce and pass out of sight, so the meaning that the word hides for HD has the diurnal quality of the butterfly. Uncertainty appears to be a key word here. Is colour essentially a mental phenomenon or tied to physical incarnation? Proust and HD would appear to respond to this by saying that the abstract persistence of colour parallels the

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[60] Woolf, 'Phases of Fiction' in Collected Essays II, (ed.) Leonard Woolf, (London: Chatto and Windus, 1966), p. 85.
[61] The Diary of Virginia Woolf, Vol III, 1925-30, (ed.) Angelica Bell, (London: Harvest and Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980), p. 7.
[62] HD, The Walls Do Not Fall, (Oxford University Press, 1944), p. 44.

perdurability of memory and spirit in the struggle against oblivion. As I see it, this struggle is drawn into Woolf's writing through colour which works as a means of communication that goes beyond speech — as a third term or 'third eye' or language of the mind. In the way that Fry experiences Post-Impressionist art, there is something which 'lies beneath'. Through the theme of colour, Woolf explores a similar dimension to writing in the way that is pointed towards by Proust and HD. An aspect of thought is made visible. This is not so much concrete and identifiable but, in the way of the diurnal and uncertain quality of the butterfly, causes meaning to evanesce within and beyond the boundaries of the text and of language.

Colour is not traditionally thought as a preoccupation of writing. However, Woolf writes that the "arts of painting and writing lay close together"[63] and that Roger Fry (indeed like herself) was "always making raids across the boundaries"[64]. Many of Fry's theories, she says, "held good for both arts"[65]. Nevertheless, as I have already pointed out, Woolf recognises a problem with Fry's aesthetic in so far as, she says, it is not 'our' sensations but Fry's own of which he is writing: "he seems to have an inexhaustible capacity for sensation; until at last, whether we see the picture itself, or only what he sees, there is nothing for it but to drop the book and take the next omnibus to the National Gallery, there to gratify the desire for seeing"[66]. What appears to be going on here is a debate on the nature of how relationships come to be formed between viewer and viewed. The Kantian position that subjectivity in the artwork is concealed — "subjectivity [...] is not the aesthetic quality as such but becomes it only through objectivation"[67] — appears to cause a problem for Woolf in its apparent failure to take account of an unspeakable, or unknown element of selfhood that, as she makes clear in 'Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown' refuses to be objectified or represented as such.

Woolf's critique of Fry can be seen to fall within the theoretical contours of Jean-Louis Schefer

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[63] Woolf, Roger Fry, pp. 239-240.
[64] Ibid., pp. 239-240.
[65] Ibid., pp. 239-240.
[66] Ibid., p. 228.
[67] Adorno, Aesthetic Theory, p. 169.

and Stephen Bann and the influential nature of particular writings as outlined in my introduction. Schefer's position seeks to understand the complexity of his encounters with visual objects. He regards the incorporation of a personal history (or 'myth') into both the artwork, and his encounter with it, as vital in the relationship of viewer to viewed. This relationship is defined as a search for what he calls the "unknown centre of ourselves"[68]. In his introduction to Schefer's work, translator and editor Paul Smith articulates this as: "the search for the internal history"[69], notable in that it "never reaches a conclusion"[70]. The (already) mythical nature of artworks, or of our encounters with them, thus becomes displaced by what Schefer reveals to be "another, more 'mythological' one"[71]. What I understand to be going on here is that subjectivity, as it is concealed in the artwork (in a Kantian sense), collides with the (equally hidden) subjectivity of the viewer. The search for a personal history, as it progresses in the viewing subject, is brought to bear on what he or she is contemplating. It is in this way that Schefer's 'more mythological' encounter comes to be formed. The 'unknown' within the self becomes a part of what is seen and how we come to see it. This is aptly described by Paul Smith as "the formation of a subjectivity that is lost even as it is formed"[72].

As I state in my introduction, the mythical encounter that Schefer is describing can be brought into dialogue with the psychoanalytic reading that Stephen Bann brings to Ruskin's critical writings. Bann sees the inclusion of a personal history in Ruskin's writings on Turner — that is a history which stems from Ruskin's particular relation as viewer and which relies on this set of relations to become readable (I say readable guardedly — in the way that Schefer defines his notion of a 'more mythological' encounter). Through a psychoanalytic engagement with Ruskin's writings, Bann unpacks some of the elements that can be seen to bear witness to Schefer's theoretical model. On Bann's reading, the play of colour in Turner's paintings introduces the object into a personal history — this is the history of the viewing subject (in this case, Ruskin).

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[68] Schefer, The Enigmatic Body, p. x.
[69] Ibid., pp. 156-157.
[70] Ibid., p. 157.
[71] Ibid., p. 157.
[72] Ibid., p. 156.

In the way that Schefer articulates the relationship between viewer and viewed, so Bann's analysis of Ruskin reads the critic as bringing elements of his own personal history to an 'understanding' of Turner's paintings.

In the meeting of viewer and viewed, Schefer discusses what he sees as a myth that displaces a previous 'understanding' with "another, more 'mythological' one"[73]. In other words, the objectivation that in Kant and Fry is inherent in the artwork is displaced by the personal history of the viewing subject. In his introduction to Schefer, Paul Smith articulates such encounters as a relation between the text as painting and the text as writing. It is in this way, as I have argued, that Woolf's critique of Fry's subjectivism is set in motion. Woolf's critique of Fry would appear to be involved in the articulation of such a relationship: "whether we see the picture itself, or only what he sees, there is nothing for it but to drop the book and take the next omnibus to the National Gallery, there to gratify the desire for seeing"[74]. The relationship that Bann articulates between Ruskin and Turner is the kind of meeting that, it would appear, is essential for Woolf — as an encounter that disturbs and brings into relief the contradictions between representations and the subject's processes of consciousness and interpretation. In Woolf, however, and as I will go on to argue more in my reading of The Years, this set of contradictions is not restricted to encounters with artworks but is a general philosophical approach to all subject object relations. Nevertheless, while Schefer's theoretical writings concentrate on encounters with artworks, the task that he sets himself — "to represent the unrepresentable, to make visible in writing what is invisible in the encounter with the object"[75] — is the task, as I see it, that Woolf undertakes. Schefer's notion of an "internal being"[76] is relevant to the model of uncertainty that is central in my reading of Woolf.

In his introduction to Schefer, The Enigmatic Body, Smith introduces the 'internal being' thus:

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[73] Ibid., p. 157.
[74] Woolf, Roger Fry, p. 228.
[75] Schefer, The Enigmatic Body, p. x.
[76] Ibid., p. xiii.

> the figure he most often wants to make visible, is this enigmatic body (or what he variously calls "an internal being" or a "paradoxical body"), which, he says, constitutes "what is missing" from our encounters with art objects and writing: time and memory separate us from any realizable figuration of ourselves. This separation is the condition of possibility for the residue — the repressed, or even the trace, as it might be described in other discursive regimes — of the "internal body"[77]

Representation always figures an 'unknown centre' of self. As Smith goes on to say, Schefer's 'enigmatic body' is not to be understood as a spiritual essence but as a "fantasy that gives shape to the subject's experiencing of the object [that is] a changing relation of two changing entities — the subject and the object"[78]. A moment such as this emerges in Woolf's writing through the theme of colour. Colour has the capacity to evoke the ineffable nature of mind and works to make visible a hidden core of unity that is essential to Woolf's formation of character and selfhood. Through a reading of The Years, we can see a philosophical uncertainty about the nature of subject and object relations, thought and perception, at work: an 'enigmatic body' or fantasy of something that is in fact absent from the objects viewed or read can be seen to emerge yet is resistant to representation and interpretation. This is the kind of reading that Bann performs in relation to Ruskin through a psychoanalytic encounter with the text (and which I will make, to some extent, in my readings of Beckett and Eliot). However, although I am not intending a strictly psychoanalytic reading of Woolf's The Years, (I am interested in how perception works in this novel on a number of different levels) it is in this novel, I will argue, that Woolf's most private — or unspeakable — elements of experience begin to seep through. A fixed and identifiable 'I', or inward stream-of-consciousness does not emerge in The Years. Yet, neither do we get Kristeva's sense of an "I Who Want Not To Be"[79] in whom, Kristeva says, the ego "founders and sinks"[80] under the weight of patriarchy and the socio-political battle. Kristeva

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[77] Ibid., p. xiii.
[78] Ibid., p. xiii.
[79] Kristeva, 'About Chinese Women' in The Kristeva Reader, (ed.) Toril Moi, (Oxford UK & Cambridge USA: Blackwell, 1986), p. 156.
[80] Ibid., p. 157.

specifically cites Woolf in this context:

> Once the moorings of the word, the ego, the superego, begin to slip, life itself can't hang on: death quietly moves in [...] I think of Virginia Woolf, who sank wordlessly into the river, her pockets weighted down with stones. Haunted by voices, waves, lights, *in love with colours — blue, green —* and seized by a strange gaiety that would bring on the fits of strangled screeching laughter recalled by Miss Brown"[81] (*my emphasis*)

Against Kristeva's 'silent other' of the symbolic order, or the "strangled screeching laughter"[82] (namely jouissance) that she attributes to Miss Brown, I see Woolf's Mrs Brown as making visible an eternal essence of character that is unspeakable, enigmatic. The sense of loss that threatens in Kristeva is rallied against. Rather, what we face in an encounter with Mrs Brown is Schefer's 'enigmatic body' — an "internal being"[83] or "paradoxical body"[84] — which, as he says, constitutes "what is missing"[85] from our encounters with art objects and writing. On Schefer's model, a separation such as this is the condition of possibility for the residue — the repressed or trace of the 'internal body' — to emerge. It is in this way that Woolf's famous call to "look within"[86] rejects realist intepretations of character and self in a bid to account for this moment of loss, or as I have referred to it throughout this chapter, 'unspeakable'.

Articulation of a sense of loss is a familiar zone in Schefer's work. Again, it is perhaps best formulated by Paul Smith: "where the subject's perception (the primacy of the visible) begins to touch the world of meaning (the appearance of the intelligible, or the legible)"[87], the subject "finds itself unable to find itself there"[88]. Arguing against a quintessentially post-modernist reading where 'insignificance' would form the overriding principle of Schefer's position, Paul Smith defines the principle rather as one of uncertainty or hesitation:

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[81] Ibid., p. 157.
[82] Ibid., p. 157.
[83] Schefer, The Enigmatic Body, p. xiii.
[84] Ibid., p. xiii.
[85] Ibid., p. xiii.
[86] Virginia Woolf, 'Modern Fiction' in The Common Reader, First Series, ed. Andrew McNeillie, (London: The Hogarth Press, 1984), p. 149.
[87] Schefer, 'Cy Twombly: Uncertainty Principle' in The Enigmatic Body, p. 147.
[88] Ibid., p. 147.

It is the exploration of the uncertain location of both subject (spectator) and object (what is represented) in the space between perception and intelligibility that renders [Twombly's] work important in Schefer's understanding of the history of figuration. The work indeed allows the *appearance* of that uncertainty; and furthermore, it allows the subject to glimpse the realm of a "science" of memory and experience outside "science" as rational knowledge or as the systematic imposition of representational codes upon the subject's experience. It is the emergence of the subject within the catchment of this paradoxical arena that has begun to attract Schefer's attention[89]

The implications of Schefer's uncertainty can be identified in Woolf. Schefer's "space between perception and intelligibility"[90] is set to work in her writing on a number of different levels. Schefer's space calls to mind what I have referred to as a 'borderline' between two states and which appears in Woolf as a moment between sleeping and waking, life and death, inner and outer. Schefer's notion of 'uncertainty' is also there through the enigmatic potential of *Mrs Brown.* As Woolf articulates such encounters, a similar sense of mischief or uncertainty undermines 'scientific' epistemological investigation of selfhood. Woolf's appropriation of brown, one of the most common English names and a referent, as Spengler tells us, to "the unrealest colour that there is"[91], stakes a claim for its undiminished purity as a vehicle for the metaphysical passage she seeks. Mrs Brown resides in an ambivalent space. Brown is selected for its ability to describe in a new way the 'enigma' formed in and through the stage through which perception must pass in order to become meaning.

This set of suppositions can, of course, be approached from two directions: from the relation of thought to consciousness and also, as Schefer reminds us, from scientific laws relating to perception. Woolf's position, as I have explored it so far, centralises the relation of thought to consciousness within the domain of aesthetics. I now want to briefly address some of the ways in

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[89] Ibid., pp. 147-148.
[90] Ibid., p. 147.
[91] Cited in Riley, Colour Codes, p. 49.

which this can be seen to be made complex in Woolf's writing through an engagement with a more scientific response to perception and the ways in which, as I see it, this feeds back into Woolf's exploration of thought and consciousness.

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The uncertainty of perception: Woolf and science

To consider the science path we need to turn for a moment to what has been said on colour in terms of a general law of physics. The climate of modernism is saturated with scientific questioning and experiment, and quantum physics is not alien to Woolf and the Bloomsbury circle.[92] Einstein's special theory of relativity became known in 1905 and his general theory in 1916. Planck's quantum theory (1900) revives Newton's corpuscular theory[93] and develops into a set of mathematical formulas based on Heisenberg's uncertainty principle (1927) and the wave equation, discovered by Schrödinger (1933). Quantum theory in light of Heisenberg's and Schrödinger's discoveries develops the principle that energy and time or position and momentum cannot both be accurately measured simultaneously; the product of their uncertainty is always

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[92] See Gillian Beer, Virginia Woolf, (Edinburgh University Press, 1996) for an essay on Woolf and physics.
[93] Planck's quantum theory concerns the behaviour of physical systems – that they can only possess certain properties (such as energy and momentum) in discrete amounts. Corpuscular theory holds that light consists of a stream of particles (taken from Collins English dictionary).

greater than or equal to a fundamental constant of energy divided by its frequency.[94] The wavelength theory of light and colour was, however, established much earlier. At the beginning of the 19th century Goethe claims the findings of this theory to be the result of mistaking an incidental result for an elemental principle and subsequently undertakes an exhaustive personal observation of the phenomena of colour. Although his scientific conclusions have long since been discredited, the beauty of his enquiry, his conjectures regarding the connection between colour and philosophical thought still hold aesthetic value. Goethe's theory can be read as the findings of a personal analysis of colour, an analysis which takes on board observable physical phenomena but does not pretend to a knowledge, but more of an 'understanding'. Goethe characterises physical colour contrasts as a *more* and *less*, whereby the division of colours is considered antecedently to white and black. There is a permanent physical basis that arises out of grey shadow, from, in other words, a neutral tone intermediate between white and black (and that has no hue): "we assume a white and black already produced and fixed, and the question is, how colour can be excited in them?"[95]. Goethe gives the denomination 'chemical colours' to colours which we "can produce, and more or less fix, in certain bodies [...] to which, therefore, we ascribe a certain permanency: duration is their prevailing characteristic"[96]. The importance of duration for Goethe is perhaps best illustrated through an example of his preoccupation with the study of the after-vision or afterimage:

> I had entered an inn towards evening, and, as a well-favoured girl, with a brilliantly fair complexion, black hair, and a scarlet bodice, came into the room, I looked attentively at her as she stood before me at some distance in half shadow. As she presently afterwards turned away, I saw on the white wall, which was now before me, a black face surrounded with a bright light, while the dress of the perfectly distinct figure appeared of a beautiful sea-green[97]

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[94] As an example, if a flask of hydrocyanic acid, radioactive material and a Geiger counter are placed in a closed box then according to quantum theory, the radioactive decay of an atom and therefore its consequences become real only when they are observed. Until then there is a precise fifty-fifty chance that radioactive decay has occurred. Jenny Diski uses this experiment in her novel Skating to Antarctica (1997) to show how quantum theory is a valuable tool in the disturbing question whether her mother is alive or dead. What the experiment shows for Diski is precisely the uncertainty, or the possibility of her mother being neither dead nor alive, until she lifts the lid to look. It is the act of looking that makes certain.

[95] Goethe, Theory of Colours, p. 206.

[96] Ibid., p. 201.

[97] Ibid., p. 22.

White and black are transposed. Yet the colour they excite is made indeterminate: duration changes scarlet to sea-green. An attentive observer, Goethe writes, sees these appearances everywhere while, on the other hand, "the uninstructed, like our predecessors, regard them as temporary visual defects"[98]. Goethe's sense of duration in colour, the afterimage, goes hand-in-hand with his exploration of transparent or semi-transparent mediums. Transparent substances, he writes, may be said to be "in the highest class of inorganic matter. With these, colourless semi-transparence is closely connected, and white may be considered the last opaque degree of this [...] Black is not exhibited in so elementary a state as white"[99]. He gives an example of this in the case of pounded glass appearing as white powder: here, the accidentally opaque state of a pure transparent substance may be called white.

Woolf undertakes a Goethe-like experiment in the short story, 'Blue and Green'[100]. The story is divided into two parts and resembles a form of 'experiment'. The first part, *Green* follows patterns of light as it slides down fingers of glass. Studying the reflections conjures wild images in the imagination, from the feathers of parakeets to desert sand. As the light changes on the glass the green drops of colour turn to blue. *Blue* tells the story of a snub-nosed monster spouting water through its nostrils as it sits on the beach. This short story is a development on from 'Solid Objects'[101] where Woolf, in her obsession with 'things', tries to articulate what it is to perceive objects[102]: *Green* and *Blue* are the two respective objects set "at the opposite end of the mantelpiece"[103] in 'Solid Objects'. The "lump of glass [...] so mute and contemplative"[104] and the "creature from another world [...] china so vivid and alert"[105] become in 'Blue and Green' drips and spouts of colour. While in *Green* the transparency of glass takes on bodily form,

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[98] Ibid., p. 22.
[99] Ibid., pp. 204-205.
[100] This story is arranged on facing pages in Woolf's collection, Selected Short Stories, (ed.) Sandra Kemp, (London: Penguin, 1993), pp. 44-45, (all subsequent citations from the story will reference this edition).
[101] Virginia Woolf, in Selected Short Stories.
[102] For an examination of this story in relation to 'objects' in themselves, for instance in the emergence into the contemporary art scene of Duchamp's 'ready mades', see Bill Brown, 'The Secret Life of Things: Virginia Woolf and the Matter of Modernism', in *Modernism/Modernity*, Vol. 6, No. 2, (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1999), pp. 1-28.
[103] Woolf, 'Solid Objects' in Selected Short Stories, p. 64.
[104] Ibid., p. 64.
[105] Ibid., p. 64.

"pointed fingers"[106], in *Blue* the solid object of the snub-nosed monster becomes "heavy with water [...] blunt, obtuse"[107]. In this way, both the glass and the solid object are rendered *semi*-transparent. Their exclusivity as transparent or opaque becomes uncertain: the glass veers more towards opaqueness and the object becomes less so. Duration heightens this uncertainty. While the light which slides down the glass begins as green, as the light changes the hue turns to blue; pools of green become blots of blue. In contrast, the solid object retains its blueness. As in Goethe's vignette of the girl, white and black mediate the instance of colour on both glass and object. Goethe claims that black is not so elementary as white, so in Woolf's 'experiment' black comes closer to a materiality. Blue merges with black to emphasise the material nature of the object: "strokes of blue line the black tarpaulin of [the monster's] hide"[108]. White is more enigmatic. White blossoms "here and there"[109] on the glass, both present and absent. In the object white is the centre from which blue comes. White-turned-blue sprays onto the monster. Once the blue lands it becomes blue-black. What is interesting here is that the blue-black of the monster is not an afterimage but an example of the excitation of colour as it comes into being through the transformative potential of the white that lands. The blue-black of the monster is in fact white. To restate Goethe: "the accidentally opaque state of a pure transparent substance might be called white"[110].

A number of questions present themselves here that link back to Schefer's uncertain location of both subject and object. What is apparent in the examples cited above — and crucial for Schefer — is that Woolf allows the *appearance* of uncertainty. Here, between opaque and transparent, material and immaterial. Or, on Schefer's model, the subject glimpses "the realm of a 'science' of memory and experience outside 'science' as rational knowledge or as the systematic imposition of representational codes upon the subject's experience"[111]. Woolf's experiment would appear to ask to what extent white can be regarded as a state of purity. Or, to what extent does white

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[106] Woolf, 'Blue and Green' in Selected Short Stories, p. 44.
[107] Ibid., p. 45.
[108] Ibid., p. 45.
[109] Ibid., p. 44.
[110] Goethe, Theory of Colours, p. 204.
[111] Schefer, 'Cy Twombly: Uncertainty Principle' in The Enigmatic Body, p. 147.

become purity's opposite — pure receptivity? Is white a colour or the recipient of every colour? Again, linking back to Schefer, what appears to be at play here is the opening of a space between perception and intelligibility that is rendered uncertain and yet allows the subject to glimpse this uncertainty.

One of the most famous examples of what could be read as a literary response to this set of relations takes place in Melville's Moby Dick and shares key questions with the themes under discussion. As is well known, in Melville's novel, the narrator Captain Ahab goes in search of a white object and the shadow of a white object. Melville writes:

> in essence whiteness is not so much a colour as the visible absence of colour, and at the same time the concrete of all colours: is it for these reasons that there is such a dumb blankness, full of meaning, in a wide landscape of snows — a colourless, all-colour of atheism from which we shrink?[112]

Captain Ahab's quest can be linked to Schefer's notion of the 'enigmatic' or 'internal' body which (as I have already stressed) he sees as constituting what is missing in our encounters with [art] objects. Driven in this way by an illusory perception of an object, Melville sends the captain in search of a phantom, that which, in the philosophy of Plato, is objective reality as distorted by perception. It is here that Melville offers a means of responding to the question raised earlier of how colour works not only in relation to how we perceive the external world, but as a way of addressing the relation between thought and perception. In Melville's story, as loss of 'the body' strikes home, both physically and metaphysically, Captain Ahab's quest becomes a delightful form of suffering. The joyful experience of pursuit is invariably accompanied by a sense of the nothingness, the mortality and the foreign nature of that which is being pursued. These are themes that bear comparison to the analysis I have brought to the figure of 'Mrs Brown' in Woolf's polemical essay. Woolf's joyful recognition of an element to selfhood that evades the

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[112] Herman Melville, Moby Dick, (Oxford University Press, 1988; first publ. 1851), p. 199.

literary devices of the likes of Galsworthy and Wells is, nevertheless, accompanied by a form of suffering (in the way that Melville describes it) that is inherent within the sense of evasiveness she is describing.

One of the things that Woolf would appear to be searching for in Mrs Brown is Schefer's 'internal being' — that which constitutes "what is missing"[113] from our encounters with [art] objects and writing. On Schefer's model, time and memory separate us from any realisable figuration of ourselves. This separation, or suffering, is the condition of possibility for the residue to emerge. Again, links can be drawn here with Woolf's polemical essay. In 'Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown' Woolf writes of "a little figure [who] rose before me" (*BB*, 69). Referred to as "a phantom" (*BB*, 69) and uncertain whether "the figure of a man, or of a woman" (*BB*, 69), Woolf offers a challenge to: "Catch me if you can" (*BB*, 69). A realisable figuration of self is not lost or dissolved but is yet uncertain. There are several interpretations or directions that can be seen to emerge here: i) the invocation of the muse as a challenge to the creative process and the formation of character; ii) the dissolution of self versus stable identifiable ego redrawn as the unknown within the self; iii) uncertain sex/gender identity.

While I have been discussing Woolf in relation to the creative process and models of self, Woolf's experimenting with sexuality has so far not been addressed. However, while I am not intending to underake a study of sexuality in this thesis, it is worth noting that in the appearing figure "of a man, or of a woman" (*BB*, 69), the enigmatic nature of brown (as the 'unrealest' colour there is) echoes and plays into the uncertain sex and/or gender that Woolf is portraying. Of course, in 1927-28 (the essay was written in 1927) Woolf was writing Orlando: A Biography (1929) — a tale of sexual revolution in which the hero turns heroine. Certain characteristics can be seen to link these works. As Lee writes in her biography of Woolf, "Orlando's biographer is written in as a character in pursuit of his/her subject, always self-consciously referring back to the conventions, which are not always adequate for the task in hand"[114]. Citing Woolf's own

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[113] Schefer, The Enigmatic Body, p. xiii.
[114] Lee, Virginia Woolf, p. 8.

words on Orlando in this context, she writes: "For that was the way his mind worked now, in violent see-saw from life to death"[115]. Orlando is positioned on a borderline between male/female and between life/death. As is well known, the figure of Orlando is modelled on Vita Sackville-West, Woolf's friend and lover (with whom she began an affair in 1925) and, on reading this story, Sackville-West says: "she falls in love with herself"[116]. In the way that Woolf writes of the phantom in Mrs Brown, "catch me if you can" (*BB*, 69), so in the reading of Orlando Sackville-West appears to have grasped an element of herself that had previously eluded her. Such evidence introduces a different level of engagement with the autobiographical elements or suggestions that evolve in Woolf's writing of 'Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown'. Not only does this essay express her concerns about the unknown within the self and the elusive nature of character (and the difficulties that this presents to the writer), but on a psychoanalytic reading such as Bann undertakes with Ruskin, Woolf's sexuality — her bisexuality — can be seen to play amongst the uncertain colourless all-colour that is 'brown'. In addition to the aesthetic preoccupation I have described here, and inseparably from it, brown contains the whole of the spectrum within its hue and is thus the colour that Woolf uses, guardedly, to express the promise of bisexuality and cross-gender politics.

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[115] Cited in Lee, Virginia Woolf, p. 8.
[116] Lee, Virginia Woolf, p. 485.

Colour as 'perception' and colour as 'state of mind' in The Years

My reading of Woolf's The Years will navigate a terrain between Fry's (Kantian) notion of aesthetic reflection (subjectivity objectified in the artwork) and Bann's unearthing of a more uncertain personal history that unsettles it. Bann's psychoanalytic reading of colour — as a way of introducing a personal history into Ruskin's aesthetic — reaches beyond Fry's claim for colour as 'state of mind' (Fry's position is strictly in relation to his notion of the purity of form). It is in this way that at certain moments in The Years, it can be argued that a connotative field can be seen to emerge which, through the theme of colour, feeds into both aesthetic exploration and a more personal, autobiographical domain. While writing The Waves in 1929, Woolf wrote in a letter to Hugh Walpole that the novel might be called autobiography: "only autobiography is literature — novels are what we peel off, and come at last to the core, which is only you or me"[117]. In her biography of Woolf, Hermione Lee picks up on this tension between fiction and autiobigraphy. It is, she says, "at its fiercest"[118] in the writing of The Years, where Woolf includes the history of her family, her childhood, her war, her life in London, her friends, and the politics of the cultural and political moment. Yet what is striking about this novel, and as Lee's biography points out, is that there is no 'I', no inward stream-of-consciousness as in Woolf's earlier fictional writings. Rather, Woolf "conceals her autobiography through structure and tone [...] she needed to disguise the personal sources of this [social] analysis in a narrative with no sacrosanct private spaces"[119]. Through an analysis of the theme of colour and how it can be seen to play out in The Years, I will argue that Woolf's sacrosanct private spaces start to seep through in an entirely different way to her earlier fictions. (This is a position I also take up in my reading of a personal, autobiographical element in Beckett and Eliot). Writing The Waves, Woolf acts out the secret unspoken inner life of the self. In a diary extract Woolf talks about the process of writing The

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[117] Letter from Virginia Woolf to Hugh Walpole, 28 Dec 1932, The Letters of Virginia Woolf, ed Nigel Nicolson and Joanne Trautmann, (Hogarth Press, 1975-80), Vol V, p. 142. Cited in Virginia Woolf, Lee, p. 637.
[118] Lee, Virginia Woolf, p. 637.
[119] Ibid., pp. 637-638.

Waves thus: "I am going to enter a nunnery"[120]; she refers to the novel as a story of "The Lonely Mind"[121]. In contrast, in The Years the inner selves of the characters emerge not as stream-of-consciousness but through a philosophical musing on the nature of thought and perception. The characters are formed through a relation between inner and outer, self and social. What this kind of writing produces in Woolf, as she herself says, is a state of "constant effort, anxiety, & risk"[122] and, as Lee's biography suggests, an element of the personal is disguised or concealed. In the way that Bann uncovers disguised or concealed elements in Ruskin's writings, it is through the theme of colour that Woolf's anxieties can be seen to be located within the fabric of the text. In this way, Woolf's preoccupation with death and with suicide — and with the notion of a borderline state between life and death (similarly expressed in Beckett) — can be seen to emerge.

Woolf's title The Years, along with the novel's chapter headings (1880, 1891, 1907, 1908, 1910, 1911, 1913, 1914, 1917, and Present Day (somewhere in the 1930s)) establish a sense of a linear progression through time. Yet, the movement of ideas and the development of character and plot constantly defies linear time to shift back and forth among a 'layering' of moments, not just within this 50 year period but extending back to primitive woman and forward into the unknown. The novel opens: "It was an uncertain spring. The weather, perpetually changing, sent clouds of blue and of purple flying over the land."[123] Each subsequent chapter begins with meteorological conditions as it can be forecast by the colours of the prevailing sky. Yet, Woolf's apparent commonplace references to the external world have higher stakes. Developing colour into a realm that goes beyond the visible, Woolf explores colour as an uncertain phenomenon and as resistant to categorical thought. One of the questions that thus emerges is to ask what happens if colour is explored as a point of contact between political, cultural, aesthetic and personal histories.

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[120] The Diaries of Virginia Woolf, 4 Sept 1929, Vol III, p. 251. Cited in Lee, p. 640.
[121] Ibid., p. 640.
[122] The Diaries of Virginia Woolf, 28 July 1934, Vol IV, p. 233. Cited in Lee, p. 639.
[123] Virginia Woolf, The Years, (London: Penguin, 1968), p. 5 (hereafter cited *TY*).

The Years begins in 1880 where we are introduced to the Pargiters, a perhaps typical middle-class Victorian family living in London. The lives of individuals develop through the dialogues, thoughts and feelings of their everyday existence, interweaving the subtle changes and continuities on their passage through time, to conclude somewhere in the 1930s. The story is shrouded in an apparent air of secrecy: people die, young and old alike, but their causes of death are left unexplained; people attend 'meetings' but we are not informed of their purpose or of what transpires; personal 'secrets' are often hinted at but are not revealed; liaisons take place, people marry – yet we are not witness to the sexual desire or romantic idealism explored in, for instance, The Voyage Out (1915) or Night and Day (1915). In certain respects the novel could be said to stand alone in Woolf's oeuvre: the prose is not experimental in the high modernist style of Jacob's Room (1922), To the Lighthouse (1927) or The Waves (1931); its content is not obviously polemical in the way of A Room of One's Own (1929) or Three Guineas (1938); and we are not given a central character in the sense of a Mrs Dalloway (1925) or Orlando (1928). It is perhaps for some or all of these reasons that many readers, Leonard Woolf among them, regarded The Years as a failure[124]. Yet the originality of The Years is its profound philosophical questioning about the nature of thought and perception. If Woolf is engaged in articulating the unspeakable, as I have suggested, then could the novel be anything but a failure? Is its very motivation under obligation to fail? The novel repeatedly articulates epistemological and ontological doubt – 'Where am I?' ; 'Who am I?'; "Am I that or am I this?" (*TY*, 113); "What's I?" (*TY*, 114) – and, as Jeri Johnson writes, weaves a pattern of moments that "distinguishes them from those 'moments of being' so typical of Woolf's earlier fiction".[125] Johnson argues, very convincingly, that Woolf's scepticism in The Years centralises the discontinuities and falsifying logic of linear time. But by placing epistemological concerns about the nature of colour at the centre of Woolf's scepticism a subtle dialogue can be mapped onto the essentially mysterious relation that Wolf explores between subject and object. Once analysed in these terms, what can be seen in Woolf's The Years is not the 'colourful dance' of stream-of consciousness or

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[124] Jeri Johnson quotes Victoria Middleton as summarising the critics views: The Years "is an ugly and poorly written novel, at best a misfire", 'The Years' in Virginia Woolf: Introductions to the Major Works, (ed.) Julia Briggs, (London: Virago, 1994), p.319.
[125] See Jeri Johnson, in Briggs (ed.) Virginia Woolf: Introduction to the Major Works, p. 325.

of *écriture feminine* but a constructive use of colour to approach philosophical problems. While I would concede that fictions such as The Waves, To the Lighthouse, and Mrs Dalloway can be more easily situated as working within stream-of-consciousness, The Years marks a turning point for Woolf and signals a new layer to Woolf's literary moments. As Woolf writes in her diary, compared to the writing of The Waves the process of writing The Years was completely different and reflected "a fresh form of being, that is of expression, for everything I feel & think"[126]. The high modernist style of her earlier works acts as departure into a more strictly philosophical rather than painterly use of colour through which, in The Years, Woolf can be seen to be involved in creating a "new form"[127] for her "new sensations"[128].

One of the novel's central figures, Sara (and who is also known as Sally) is introduced as living on *Browne* Street. Given the strength with which brown operates in Woolf's polemical essay I would suggest that her choice of naming is, here, perhaps more than a coincidence. Again, it is perhaps not a flippant choice of naming that Sara becomes involved with "a foreigner" (*TY*, 248), a man "they call Brown" (*TY*, 248). The character of Nicholas *Brown* throws doubt on the question of national identity — he is a foreigner with a name that is obviously not foreign. Echoing the themes raised in Woolf's polemical essay, Brown is a man defined by his questions: "... how can we make laws, religions, that fit, that fit, when we don't know ourselves?" (*TY*, 253). Brown is again invoked in the context of a philosophical approach to thought when in 1907 (the third chapter of The Years), Sara is found reading a "little brown volume" (*TY*, 113) — of which we are not made aware of the title — written by a man who claims that ""the world's nothing but thought"" (*TY*, 113). Sara is puzzled by such a notion:

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[126] The Diary of Virginia Woolf, 28th July 1934, Vol IV, ed. Anne Olivier Bell and Andrew McNeillie, (Hogarth Press, 1975-80), p. 233.
[127] Woolf, 'Hours in a Library', in Collected Essays II, p. 39.
[128]. Ibid., p. 39

[...] Where did thought begin?

In the feet? She asked. There they were, jutting out under the single sheet. They seemed separated, very far away. She closed her eyes. Then against her will something in her hardened. It was impossible to act thought. She became something; a root; lying sunk in the earth; veins seemed to thread the cold mass; the tree put forth branches; the branches had leaves.

'— the sun shines through the leaves,' she said, waggling her finger. She opened her eyes in order to verify the sun on the leaves and saw the actual tree standing out there in the garden. Far from being dappled with sunlight, it had no leaves at all. She felt for a moment as if she had been contradicted. For the tree was black, dead black (*TY*, 108)

To reiterate Schefer, what can be identified here is the uncertain location of both subject (spectator) and object (what is represented) in the space between perception and intelligibility. Woolf allows the *appearance* of this uncertainty. The stark juxtaposition of mind image, empowered by an inner light, and external impression which is light-dependent on the sun is clearly apparent. Sara's intention is to locate where thought might begin. Engaged in questioning, looking and sensation she oscillates between inner and outer worlds – between mind and matter; light and dark; life and death. Note how the distinction between mind and matter is brought into question. Sara can see her feet, she can waggle her fingers. Vision and sensation are physical attributes associated with the experiencing of objects. Thinking on the other hand, as a similar 'entirely ordinary' experience, is at the same time something entirely hidden. Closing her eyes and focusing inwards Sara tries to see the process of thinking. The impossibility of either visualising or acting thought forces a turn to metaphor and the apparent safety of objecthood: Sara became "some-*thing*" (*TY*, 108). Yet the authenticity of the object is likewise soon thrown into question. In her mind's eye what she conjures is a representation of the tree, as she remembers it. But the image does not coincide with the tree as she sees it once her eyes are opened. Her mind is able to conjure the tree in its entirety: from its roots lying sunk in the earth to the smallest detail of its leaves. Once she opens her eyes the essential qualities of 'tree' are no longer visible. Lack of light renders the tree "black, dead black" (*TY*, 108). Living roots are contrasted with a visible image of *dead black*, suggestive of a state somewhere between life and death. The evasive nature of character, as Woolf articulates it through her vision of Mrs Brown, is played out here as a more philosophical engagement with thought and perception, inner and outer. As in Woolf's polemical essay, brown is the trigger for such questioning — a "little brown volume" (*TY*, 113) makes

uncertain the nature of thought and how it can be represented. To 'look within' makes uncertain the visual external world and vice-versa — an eye on exteriority renders uncertain the realm of thought.

Reading Ruskin we are told that all objects are seen by the eye as patches of colour of a certain shape, with gradations of colour within them. The outline of any object is the limit of its mass, as relieved against another mass. Ruskin does not separate light and shade from colour, but claims that all nature is seen as a mosaic composed of graduated portions of different colours, dark or light:

> Every light is a shade, compared to higher lights, till you come to the sun; and every shade is a light, compared to deeper shades, till you come to the night. When, therefore, you have outlined any space, you have no reason to ask whether it is in light or shade, but only, of what colour it is, and to what depth of that colour[129]

The depth of colour attributed to the 'actual' tree in Sara's field of vision takes impression to its end point: "dead black" (*TY*, 108). Recall Fry's stating of impressionism that it pushed representation to its end point. Here, Ruskin's description of colour forming the field of vision contrasts sharply with Fry's notion of colour as 'state of mind'. In Sarah's description, black does not appear to be a descriptive element of 'deadness'. Rather, I want to suggest, 'black' and 'dead' are co-existent yet independent modes of perception, brought together through the uncertainty of looking within and looking without.

Ruskin solved the problem of colour versus light and shade by treating them as coexistent factors in the same field of vision. He draws distinction between form as an objective attribute and colour as something shared by the object with its surroundings. In contrast, Woolf's fascination with the manner in which objects and scenes are rendered visible offers a vital sense of the

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[129] John Ruskin, The Complete Works of John Ruskin, ed. E. T. Cook & Alexander Wedderburn, Library Edition, 39 vols. (London: George Allen, 1903-12), 15.361.

importance of restoring sight as enigmatic. Thus, in the example cited above, it could be argued that an unconscious factor is brought into the field of vision: an internal visualisation of what death might look like renders the (external) picture uncertain and not immediately recognisable. Note the link that can be made here to Post-Impressionist technique. The inner picture is lit by the sun or, as Kandinsky writes, an 'inner light': "She became something; a root; lying sunk in the earth; veins seems to thread the cold mass; the tree put forth branches; the branches had leaves. — 'the sun shines through the leaves" (*TY*, 108). On opening her eyes, Sarah's 'inner light' is replaced by "black, dead black" (*TY*, 108). However, while the external image is clearly stated in its relation to death, looking within only has the hint of its suggestion, conjured in Sarah's description of a "cold mass" (*TY*, 108) that is trying to bring forth life. While Ruskin's theory is played out literally among the material and physiological aspects of visual experience and conditions of perception — the eye is privileged — Woolf's model embraces the Post-Impressionist gap between things seen and their representation. Ruskin's proof of perception is made uncertain.

As I state in my introduction, Ruskin draws attention to colour, the most abstract visible signs, as those which offer the key to the most concrete certainties about the visible world. Yet, at the same time Ruskin is stuck with an inability to develop a concrete *experience* of colour in the visual arts. As already discussed, Stephen Bann analyses the way in which his writings on Turner introduce a personal history (Ruskin's relation to his former lover, Rose La Touche) into his critical writings. Thus, on Bann's reading, the concrete certainties that Ruskin claims for colour in the 'visible' world are rendered uncertain through the way he experiences such 'certainies'. Colour becomes indissolubly linked with oral and "libidinal bases of perception"[130] thus situating Ruskin's use of colour, Bann writes, as "the return of the repressed"[131]. As I have suggested, through an analysis of the way in which colour reveals a general mode of uncertainty in Woolf's

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[130] See Bann, 'The colour in the Text: Ruskin's Basket of Strawberries' in The Ruskin Polygon: Essays on the Imagination of John Ruskin, p. 125.
[131] Ibid., p. 125; p. 133.

writing, it can be argued that repressed or 'unspeakable' elements of experience can be seen to emerge. Thoughts of death and of suicide start to evanesce between the visible external world and the realm of thought, between the text as writing and another level of perception that Woolf's writing can be seen to present.

In the play of black (dead black) as Woolf describes it in Sara's relation to the tree, what we can see taking place is, perhaps, a relation between subject and object — between looking within and looking without — that can be identified with what Freud says about the death drive. As I will explore in my chapter on Beckett, Freud acknowledges the death drive to be an irrepressible force of psychical conflict that, he says, was never 'visible': "the death instinct 'eludes our perception [...] unless it is tinged with erotism'"[132]. In my chapter on Beckett, I explore the colour yellow as one way in which traces of erotism can be seen to be made visible in Beckett's writing that bears relation to the death instinct. In The Years, it is the polarity of black and white, I will argue, that contains within it the seeds of such a relation, rendered complex through an emergence of colours that, as Goethe states, black and white excite: "we assume a white and black already produced and fixed, and the question is, how colour can be excited in them?"[133]. Bann's "return of the repressed"[134] and Goethe's 'after-image' can be seen to collide on a borderline between thought and perception: as 'state of mind' made visible.

As I claim in my introduction, colour has the power to compel the most difficult aspects of a personal history to the surface of writing, precisely because of its uncertain epistemological status. In the way that Bann examines the manifold meanings of red in Ruskin's texts, there is a key that can be discerned which points back to a biographical history. Thus Ruskin's shifting of colour descriptions accorded to the manifold meanings of reds is not an unambiguous working distinction but, Bann claims, bears "a burden beyond description"[135]. From Bann's insightful

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[132] J Laplanche and J B Pontalis: The Language of Psychoanalysis, (London: Karnac Books & The Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1988), p. 99.
[133] Goethe, Theory of Colours, p. 206.
[134] Bann, 'The Colour in the Text: Ruskin's Basket of Strawberries' in The Ruskin Polygon: Essays on the Imagination of John Ruskin, p. 125; p. 133.
[135] Ibid., p. 129.

position it follows that colour contributes to, and renders, the imperfect state of our knowledge. In Woolf's writing, the string of connections that Bann makes in relation to Ruskin are, to a certain extent, played out among the fictional characters she creates. As colour functions in memory, and as Bann explores the psychoanalytic ramifications of colour through an analysis of Ruskin, so Woolf's use of colour (like Beckett and Eliot as we will see in later chapters) reveals a repetitive strain that disturbs the surface of her writing. In this context Woolf anticipates Bann's claims in a statement of her own, about Ruskin:

> His efforts to ingratiate himself with the first of those enchanting girls who made havoc of his life reminded him, he said, of the efforts of a skate in an aquarium to get up the glass [...] Some such pane of glass or other impediment was always to lie between him and the freedom of ordinary intercourse [...] The rant and fury and bitterness of his books seem to spring, not merely from the prophetic vision, but from a sense of his own frustration"[136]

Perhaps sensing a similar frustration in her own writing — in which the 'prophetic vision' is tinged with something indescribable — Woolf's defiance of conventional rules embraces the 'colouring' of memory as a trigger to transgress normal and expected bounds of personal recollection. In this way, the play of memory emphasises uncertainty about preconceived notions built on knowledge and experience. Thus, my two lines of enquiry throughout this chapter — of indescribability, or Woolf's 'unspeakable' and the relation between subject and object — converge in the way that Woolf explores the role of colour as it works in memory. Transgressing normal respected boundaries, memory brings into focus the uncertainties of life and death, inner and outer, self and other.

Earlier in this chapter attention was drawn to death as something not so much written out of The Years as clearly not 'written in'. As in the passage already cited about Sarah's inward vision

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[136] Virginia Woolf, 'Praeterita' in Books and Portraits, (London: Triad/Grafton, 1986), p. 78.

of the tree, the allusion to her own death is perhaps obvious. Laid out "under the single sheet" (*TY*, 108) she is transported: "sunk in the earth [...] a cold mass" (*TY*, 108). But, as Sara is clearly not dead, note how closely the image involves an acting out of being buried alive or, even, conjures a living death (again, these are themes that are crucial in my reading of Beckett). Of course in the post-war period this is not an unfamiliar image in literature and poetry (and, perhaps more importantly, Woolf is writing this novel on the brink of the second world war). An obvious example is Eliot's *The Wasteland* (1922) which begins with *'The Burial of the Dead'*:

> April is the cruellest month, breeding
> Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing
> Memory and desire, stirring
> Dull roots with spring rain[137]

Levenson reads these opening lines as a startling ambiguity of looking at life from beneath the ground; as a corpse planted in order to grow; the sprouting of a corpse; a theme of resurrection that implies a rising from the grave; as death that is unable to put an end to life[138]. If a corpse can sprout then, as Levenson says, no boundaries are secure. Levenson explores the unifying notion here as the theme of the retrospect, made consummate by Eliot in the figure of Tiresias who, obliged to return to old scenes and to witness old failures, is made to "endure the agony of retrospection helpless to change what it vividly sees"[139]. Yet, Proust offers us a different perspective on retrospection that shifts the frame of reference in a way that is seemingly crucial to Woolf's own concerns. He writes:

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[137] T S Eliot, *The Waste Land* in Collected Poems 1909-1962, (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), p. 63: (hereafter cited *WL*).
[138] See Levenson, A Genealogy of Modernism, pp. 172-175.
[139] Ibid., p. 174.

> We possess all our memories but not the faculty of recalling them [...] We do not recall our memories of the last thirty years, but we are wholly steeped in them; why then stop short at thirty years, why not extend this previous life back to before our birth? If I do not know a whole section of the memories that are behind me, if they are invisible to me, if I do not have the faculty of calling them to me, how do I know whether in that mass that is unknown to me there may not be some that extend back much further than my human existence? [...] this oblivion (a *de facto* oblivion, at least, since I have not the faculty of seeing anything) may extend over a life which I have lived in the body of another man, even on another planet. A common oblivion obliterates everything[140]

Proust celebrates the uncertainty of boundaries as a question of 'invisibility'. At what point does the field of the visual begin and end? How does the realm of interiority figure visually in the world? Recall earlier my claim for Proust that the abstract persistence of colour parallels the perdurability of memory and spirit in the struggle against oblivion. What appears to be at work in the above citation is a model of this: "we are wholly steeped in [memories] [...] this oblivion [...] may extend over a life which I have lived in the body of another man, even on another planet. A common oblivion obliterates everything"[141]. Clear boundaries between the living and the dead break down. On Proust's model Eliot's "disembodied aspect to consciousness"[142] (as seen by Levenson) does not hinge on the dissolution of boundaries around the self. Dissolution is itself dissolved by uncertainty. This notion is at the very core of The Years and undermines the novel's 'stated' linear movement. Memory exists in a *de facto* oblivion in the way that Proust defines it. In other words, as an allotropic element to existence. This can best be witnessed, as we will see again, through the theme of colour.

Throughout the novel various characters question 'where am I?'; 'who am I?'. Maggie asks "what's I?" (*TY*, 114) and Peggy asks "where does she begin, and where do I end?" (*TY*, 269). Likewise, Eleanor thinks to herself "my life... I haven't got one [...] Perhaps there's "I" at the middle of it [...] my life's been other people's lives" (*TY*, 295) (a thought perhaps drawn out in her doodles that are a series of repeated drawings, each having a knot at the centre with spokes

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[140] Marcel Proust, 'Sodom and Gomorrah', in In Search of Lost Time, Vol IV, trans. Scott Moncrieff & Kilmartin, (London: Vintage, 1992) p. 444.
[141] Ibid., p. 444.
[142] Levenson, A Genealogy of Modernism, p. 174.

emerging). A similar pattern develops through the reappearance of familiar 'solid objects' as they move from one place to another, shifting between generations and historical context. This is clearly apparent through examples such as the 'great crimson chair'; the 'spotted walrus' and the transmission of meanings that pass with them. Yet we can explore this notion of an allotropic element to existence, of a *de facto* oblivion, at another, deeper level, in the way that colour is not clearly assigned as the property of an object or as symbol (as in for instance the crimson chair that is offered as a symbol of familial continuity), but as something more uncertain and disturbing. There are several key instances in which this can be seen to be at work.

At the beginning of the novel, Rose, as a young girl, has an adventure alone on the streets of London where she encounters an unknown and threatening man beside a (red) pillar box. Subsequently she is haunted by visions of an "oval *white* shape" (*TY*, 34) a disembodied face as if dangling on a bit of string in front of her. If a crude Freudian reading might introduce a tinge of eroticism here — in the figure of a 'threatening' phallus — then the after-image that this conjures is converted by Rose into a *'white'* shape[143]. This vision is unspeakable. Rose cannot relay it to others. Woolf's "oval white shape" (*TY*, 34) conjures images of disembodiment, of a death-like or ghost-like presence. If we refer back to Bann's reading of Ruskin, this aspect of the story introduces, through colour, the theme of death and underlying gesture towards our own nothingness. The red — or *Rose* — of the character's name (recall this is the same name identified in Bann's analysis of reds in Ruskin) and of the pillar box becomes a (blank) white shape and would seem to play out at some level, through the apparent 'empty' vision that is recalled, the threat of non-existence, or of death. Rose's unfinished sentence to Eleanor, "I saw

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[143] In Lacanian terms, the floating object signifies "our own nothingness, in the figure of the death's head", discussed in The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis, trans. Alan Sheridan, (London: Penguin, 1994), p. 92. Here Lacan is talking specifically about Hans Holbein's painting *The Ambassadors*. In this painting the figures of two men stand either side of a series of objects all symbolic of the sciences and arts as they were grouped at the time. At the bottom of the picture is an object which, Lacan writes, from some angles appears to be flying through the air, at others to be tilted. The object cannot be known until, walking away from the painting, the act of turning round apprehends the form of a skull. "This picture is simply what any picture is, a trap for the gaze. In any picture, it is precisely in seeking the gaze in each of its points that you will see it disappear."

…" (*TY*, 36), further destabilises the subject from the object of her vision in a way that would permit such a reading. A destabilising element is again apparent in the way that Rose confuses an internalised vision of the man with a vision of Eleanor: "She was alone with something horrible [...] It came closer and closer. It was the man himself. His hand was on the door. The door opened. An angle of light fell across the wash-stand. The jug and basin were lit up. The man was actually in the room with her … but it was Eleanor" (*TY*, 34). Here, uncertainty raises the question of sex and gender as Woolf causes a collision between dark and light, inner and outer, fantasy and reality. Schefer writes that red "belongs in the theater of power [...] the colour of power and protection, both temporal or spiritual [...] *red things* don't exist"[144]. Rose rejects red to replace it with a hue that characterises an altogether different connotative field of 'nothingness', *white*. Again, on Schefer's model, like red, white has a problematic existence. Schefer calls black and white "the *villains*"[145], they steal. Black and white are not natural colours he claims but pure fictions of nature in the same way as the fog which hinders judgement is a fiction of nature (Conrad also writes of fog as principle of obscurity). Black and white are not colours by virtue of the fact that they are not attributes. Each demands the suppression of what colour is the attribute of, of "things which will not enter into the picture as functions"[146], as if white were the base and the 'social contract' for all colours that lose their autonomy in order to achieve, by means of *'what they have lost'*, an intensification of their effect. White as it appears in The Years moves between colourlessness and a shade, tint or hue that possesses within it the possibility of the spectrum. In the way that Goethe suggests, Woolf's expression of colourlessness — or nothingness — is capable of 'exciting' colour: "we assume a white and black already produced and fixed, and the question is, how colour can be excited in them"[147]. In the event of Rose's encounter with the pillar box, a movement of colour unsettles the working of memory. Proust's "*de facto* oblivion"[148] is set to work on a number of different levels and draws 'memory' — the memory of the

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[144] Schefer, 'What are Red Things' in The Enigmatic Body, p. 163.
[145] Schefer, 'Spilt Color/Blur' in The Enigmatic Body, p. 12.
[146] Ibid., p. 13.
[147] Goethe, Theory of Colours, p. 206.
[148] Proust, 'Sodom and Gomorrah' in In Search of Lost Time, Vol IV, p. 444.

character — into Woolf's unspeakable realm in which thoughts of non-existence, of death, can be seen to dwell.

In the relationship of memory to experience navigated by Rose we can see Woolf's question — 'Who am I', 'What's I' — as teetering on the borderline between life and death, stabilising existence and dispossession. If we look closely at another moment from The Years, we can see this question at work yet with a different specificity of the 'uncertainty' that Woolf's question triggers: the working of memory is drawn into the uncertainty through which memory relates to shared histor(ies). Following Rose's vision of the "white shape" (*TY*, 34), her broken sentence, "I saw …" (*TY*, 36) conjures a relative horror in Eleanor that, again, 'excites' colour, described as follows. Eleanor looks down into the hall: "a weight seemed to descend on her [...] A blankness came over her" (*TY*, 36). While for Rose the event of whiteness, or 'blankness', invites the question 'Who am I', Eleanor's question is articulated as "Where am I?" (*TY*, 36). Staring at a heavy frame, Eleanor puts herself into another picture. Eleanor becomes alone in the midst of a nothingness ('blankness') into which she must descend, "must carry her burden" (*TY*, 36). Like Rose she has an unspeakable burden. Raising her arms "as if she were carrying a pitcher, an earthenware pitcher on her head" (*TY*, 36) Eleanor descends into the past. But this is not her own past as she has lived it. Finding Proust's 'common oblivion' that 'obliterates everything' Eleanor becomes steeped in a more primitive world, re-experiencing a way of life that extends back further than her own lived life. As the moment passes, the heavy frame gradually dissolves and is transformed back into the rim of a bowl. Eleanor returns to her sense of the present moment. There is water in the bowl, as in her pitcher. Yet the bowl has another element, an element that makes it strange in colour terms: "something *yellow*. It was the dog's bowl, she realised; that was the sulphur in the dog's bowl" (*TY*, 37). What puts Eleanor into 'an-other picture' is not only the sense of an unspeakable horror (as instilled by Rose) but the potential of the yellow 'sulphurous' object. Sulphur is allotropic; its yellow a substance that exists in two or more physical forms. Focusing on this substance Eleanor's fixed stare turns inwards. Her existence takes on allotropic characteristics. The burden of primitive woman is, both physically and metaphysically, her own inescapable burden, a burden that resides between two states,

between the living and the dead. The process of thought that is shared between Eleanor and Sarah triggers a sense of the unspeakable that is expressed in terms of something to be made visible: "What had she seen? Something horrible, something hidden. But what? There it was, hidden behind her strained eyes" (*TY*, 36). A visual strain is repressed, or cannot be spoken, and causes thought to evanesce.

The "something yellow" (*TY*, 37) that 'returns' — and in which the questions 'Who am I', 'Where am I' are contextualised by Woolf — is similarly visible in the passage looked at earlier in which a borderline idea of death is brought into focus through Sara's experience in relation to the tree. Discarding the 'little brown' book Sara opens a copy of *The Antigone of Sophocles.* She flicks through the pages reading lines at random. The following scenes appear in her mind:

> The unburied body of a murdered man lay like a fallen tree-trunk, like a statue, with one foot stark in the air. Vultures gathered. Down they flopped on the silver sand. With a lurch, with a reel, the top-heavy birds came waddling; with a flap of the grey throat swinging, they hopped – she beat her hand on the counterpane as she read – to that lump there. Quick, quick, quick with repeated jerks they struck the mouldy flesh. Yes. She glanced at the tree outside in the garden. The unburied body of the murdered man lay on the sand. Then *in a yellow cloud came whirling – who?* She turned the page quickly. Antigone? She came whirling out of the dust-cloud to where the vultures were reeling and flung white sand over the blackened foot. *She stood there letting fall white dust over the blacked foot.* Then behold! There were more clouds; dark clouds; the horsemen leapt down; she was seized; her wrists were bound with withies; and they bore her, thus bound – where?
>
> There was a roar of laughter from the garden. She looked up. Where did they take her? She asked. The garden was full of people. She could not hear a word that they were saying (*TY*, 110-111)

What takes place here is a *re*-enactment of events that Sara has already experienced a few pages earlier, her sense of being laid out, in a state between death and life. Sara 'experiences' Antigone's fate *before* reading of it in the text – the book is brand new, this is the first time she has opened it. The scenes from the book take place in her mind yet are also being acted out in the garden beyond. She "beat her hand on the counterpane" (*TY*, 110) to draw the attention of the people outside to the murdered body. Nobody hears. The movement between what takes place in Ancient Greece and what takes place in London in 1907 becomes confused. Sara's identifying with the fate of Antigone is acted out in her question: "in a yellow cloud came whirling – who?

[...] Antigone? [...] thus bound where?" (*TY*, 111). It is the yellow cloud that formulates the question, another version of Eleanor's allotropic sulphurous yellow object. Like Eleanor's identification with primitive woman, Sara's *de facto* oblivion similarly extends back to the sense of a life lived in another body. Sara is Antigone. Laying herself out under the cold smooth sheets for the second time there is a sense of return from a far-off place: "her body dropped suddenly; then reached ground. A dark wing brushed her mind, leaving a pause; a blank space" (*TY*, 111). Again, we are given the image of a blank' (like the 'oval white shape' seen by Rose) that is situated within the terms of white and black: "she stood there letting fall white dust over the blacked foot" (*TY*, 110). The first haunting image of being buried alive is distilled by its being acted out in a 'for real' that nevertheless remains uncertain. The figure of 'who?' came whirling in the yellow cloud? Antigone? Sara herself? The living and the dead oscilllate in a borderline zone of uncertainty.

There is an unmistakable link here between the yellow substance through which Eleanor is transported into a life and time not strictly her own and the way in which Sara's 'yellow cloud' brings with it a similar, and equally unsettling, set of memories. Lee's biography of Woolf stresses the vital link between these two characters. Eleanor, the older Pargiter daughter, she writes, "provides the alternative key voice in the novel to her cousin"[149]. Sara is the character always "trying to work out the 'incomprehensible' relationship between belief and evidence"[150]. Like Eleanor's vision of primal woman, Sara's identification with the tale of Antigone takes place in an uncertain state: between being asleep and awake, alive and dead, between what she can actually see taking place and the working of memory. The underlying principle is one of uncertainty. To restate Lee: "what is the relationship between belief and evidence?"[151] We are left with the uncertainty of what is being acted out, who is doing the acting and to whom the memory belongs.

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[149] Lee, Virginia Woolf, p. 642.
[150] Ibid., p. 642.
[151] Ibid., p. 642.

In the citation looked at earlier, Sara is most alive at the moment when she is entrenched in darkness: "She became something; a root; lying sunk in the earth; veins seemed to thread the cold mass; the tree put forth branches; the branches had leaves" (*TY*, 108). Stiff and cold she experiences the gradual development of life-giving sensations. Yet, opening her eyes upon external reality the life she witnesses is shrouded in contradiction. Life is, in fact, resonant of death. Black *"dead black"* (*TY*, 108) makes colour function not as a redundant signification of the absence of light but, rather, has positive psychological value. In a subsequent description about the uncertainty she experiences between inner and outer this notion is established:

> she was still looking out into the garden. The man's name was Creon. He buried her. It was a moonlight night [...] The man in the loincloth gave three sharp taps with his mallet on the brick. She was buried alive. The tomb was a brick mound. There was just room for her to lie straight out. Straight out in a brick tomb, she said. And that's the end, she yawned, shutting the book.
>
> She laid herself out, under the cold smooth sheets, and pulled the pillow over her ears [...] Her body dropped suddenly; then reached ground. A dark wing brushed her mind, leaving a pause; a blank space. Everything – the music, the voices – became stretched and generalised. The book fell on the floor she was asleep (*TY*, 111)

Again, we witness a borderline between life and death. Antigone's being buried alive becomes confused with Sarah's being "laid [...] out [...] cold" (*TY*, 111) and her experience of "a blank space" (*TY*, 111). However, another reading might link colour — through Antigone — to Woolf's placing of the 'outsider' in the text. As Lee points out in her biography, in the manuscript she wrote between 1932 and 1934, Woolf had made "a radical and explicit 'outsider's' denunciation of a male-dominated, imperialist, war-mongering and class-ridden society"[152]. Sara's politics (like Eleanor's) are openly pacifist and diagnose the links in the 'masculine domain' between education, government and war-making. Given the political resonance of the yellow star worn by Jews in Nazi Germany at the time Woolf is writing this

[152] Ibid., p. 675.

novel, Sara's "yellow cloud" (*TY*, 110) that brings Antigone bears a further resonance to identity politics and links the outsideness of the woman to that of the Jew.[153]

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'I' versus 'we': the pallor of inwardness

Colour has links to memory and experience and has the capacity to evoke the ineffable nature of mind. However, with all our clarity of image and line, there is a dark opacity in the mind that cannot be crossed. To picture the mind — and to picture *with* it — is inconceivable. Yet, if colour has power to disintegrate stable balanced relations between subject and object, then is this obstruction caused by the very nature of the mind itself, its solipsistic wall? If visual perception turns inwards, if closed eyes challenge the authenticity of the external world, then does the reverse hold true: does an open eye on the world challenge the domain of the mind and make strange its communicative potential? Or, rather, can we see colour's enigma as a means of unity between the powerful forces of thought and sensation, internal and external worlds?

To answer this question in the positive as I am doing here is, of course, counter to many predominant readings of Woolf where consciousness is said to be made up of a multiplicity of fragmented sensations and associations held simultaneously in the female mode of perception. Instead, I see Woolf's writing here as closer to Wittgenstein's philosophical investigations, which

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[153] The link between the Jew and woman as outsider in the modernist text has been discussed at length. For example, see Jean Radford's essay on Dorothy Richardson in Modernity, Culture and The 'Jew', (eds.) Bryan Cheyette & Laura Marcus (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998); Jacqueline Rose, 'Dorothy Richardson and the Jew', in States of Fantasy (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).

famously treat knowledge of colours as an aspect of the epistemological problem of private language: how can one person know or express what another means by the terms 'red' or 'green'? Yet, this is not the kind of uncertainty that I am arguing is taking place in Woolf. In Woolf, it is not the terms themselves but, more, the set of associations that they conjure which poses a challenge to individual and shared experience. On Wittgenstein's model, if our use of colour terms generally brings with it a belief in their power to communicate, then at the same time the mere use of a colour term would appear to engage the reader in an enigma of solipsism, since every reader's sense of a particular colour will be unique to that individual. If solipsism then consciousness never reaches the object. The stakes of such a position can be drawn out in Woolf. Sara questions the truth value of a statement about the world as "nothing but thought" (*TY*, 113). The role of colour is vital to the discussion that follows:

> "Possibly," said Maggie, without thinking what she was saying. She put out her hand to draw the curtain.
>
> 'The world's nothing but thought, does he say?' she repeated, holding the curtain apart.
>
> She had been thinking something of the kind when the cab crossed the Serpentine; when her mother interrupted her. She had been thinking, Am I that, or am I this? Are we one, or are we separate – something of the kind.
>
> 'Then what about trees and colours?' she said, turning round [...]
>
> 'Would there be trees if we didn't see them?' said Maggie.
>
> 'What's "I"? ... "I" ...?' She stopped. She did not know what she meant. She was talking nonsense (*TY*, 113)

In this dialogue a distinction is made explicit between thinking and speaking, thought and action, 'I' and 'we'. Speech can be uttered *without thinking* and *without knowing* what is meant, whereas thought and action appear decisive, working in harmony. In an uncertain dialogue with idealist philosophy, Maggie is confused by her notion that if it is *we* who perceive the world then what is 'I'? [154], If the external world is a product of the mind then what is the nature of perception? "What about trees and colours?" (*TY*, 113) asks Maggie. Yet, in the next sentence — "Would there be trees if we didn't see them?" (*TY*, 113) — colour is dropped. It seems to me that there are two things going on here. Firstly, can there be any form of visibility that is devoid of colour?

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[154] Broadly speaking, idealist philosophies can be said to hold in common the view that the known "external world" is a product of the mind. The argument is whether our perception of it is subjective and pluralist or whether there is one objective and Absolute mind.

In other words, without colour, arguably the trees would not be visible. Secondly, if colour is purposely lost from an experience deemed 'we' then her question "What's "I" … "I" …?" (*TY*, 113) introduces a sense that colour troubles any attempt to bind 'experience' or 'I' solely into the perceptual. The missing question might be would colour exist if we didn't see it? Or, what might colour look like if it is not perceived in the external world?

These questions, again, can be addressed in The Years through close analysis of particular events as they take place near to the end of the novel. In the closing section, *Present Day*, (as already noted, a moment of impending war at the time Woolf is writing) practically all of the (still living) characters find themselves together at a party. North, Eleanor and Sarah seek to avoid 'party babble' and instead to speak about real things: personal experiences, histories, "the past and poetry" (*TY*, 328). But, at every turn, the crowd "made it unnecessary to talk" (*TY*, 328) instead finding refuge in flitting from one vacant topic to another, from one person or group to another. Amid the pointless chat North's language becomes a dialogue engaging with the effects and possibility of war. He felt that he had been in "the heart of darkness; cutting his way towards the light; but provided only with broken sentences, single words, with which to break through the briar bush of human bodies, human wills and voices, that bent over him, blinding him, blinding him …" (*TY*, 330). What appears to be a crucial link here is the way that Woolf conflates the visual with language: North moves towards the light armed with only broken sentences; other voices "blind him" (*TY*, 330). He watches bubbles rise to the surface in his glass of "yellow" (*TY*, 329) liquid and thinks of "another life; a different life" (*TY*, 329), one where national barriers would not be identifiable in political colours by "black shirts, green shirts, red shirts" (*TY*, 329)[155]. But neither does North desire "a rice pudding world, a white counterpane world" (*TY*, 329) without difference and, crucially, without colour.

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[155] According to dictionary definitions black, green and red symbolise three political strands. Black symbolises members of a fascist organisation, especially the Italian fascist party before and during the second world war. Green (berets) symbolises the British or US commando and 'democracy'. Red symbolises the communist, revolutionary socialist. In a letter to Ethel Smyth dated 18 May 1933 Woolf writes: "I dont [sic] like Fascist Italy at all — but hist! — there's the black shirt under the window — so no more", Letters of Virginia Woolf, Vol V, p. 187.

In 'Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown' Woolf defined a shift in human consciousness. So, in The Years, North demands a "new ripple in human consciousness" (*TY*, 329). As the 'yellow cloud' discussed earlier points to this end so, again, the demand is made visible through a yellow hue: "the bubble and the stream, the stream and the bubble — my self and the world together [...] he said, looking at the clear yellow liquid" (*TY*, 330). Again, Woolf develops the experiencing of this as a borderline state between sleeping and waking — or between inner and outer — that replays several key components of the particular (coloured) sensations that she attributes to Rose and to Eleanor. Woolf writes that "half *closing*" (*TY*, 340) his eyes, North drifts into a reverie of silence and solitude. (Again, this transpires in relation to a "pale yellow liquid" (*TY*, 340) that links back to several key moments in the novel discussed so far and set in a yellow hue). His surroundings, at first clearly definable as "a great space on a blue plain [...]" (*TY*, 340) begin to lose solidity. Solid objects, bodies, transform into a shadowland of colour (*TY*, 340-341). At the same moment, in the same room, Eleanor "half *opened*" (*TY*, 342) her eyes into a similar state of confusion. She repeats the question cited earlier: "where was she?" (*TY*, 342). In this crucial moment, Woolf identifies a point of uncertainty between half-open and half-closed eyes, between looking within and looking without. As North drifts into a 'closed' state so solid objects begin to lose solidity. Yet, equally, once Eleanor fully 'opens' her eyes the solid object "had vanished" (*TY*, 343). This evokes the 'scientific' approach to perception that Woolf undertakes in 'Blue and Green' as I discuss it earlier. The world is filled with people who, at first "without identity" (*TY*, 343), begin to take on recognisable characteristics. Emerging into full consciousness what is striking to Eleanor is the "curious pallor" (*TY*, 343) on all the faces; heads are "rimmed with whiteness" (*TY*, 343). As in the earlier example in which Rose conjures an 'oval white shape' to express an unspeakable vision, so Eleanor witnesses shrouds in the pallor of the dead while appearing to be speaking in the manner of the living.

As I discuss in my chapter on Beckett, a similar moment or state of uncertainty to that identified in Woolf appears in the way Beckett talks about looking inwards at the mind and looking outwards at the external world. Setting North's half-closed eyes against Eleanor's half-opened, Woolf establishes a point at which reality is projected in two seemingly conflicting directions —

towards the inner mind and the external world. The blinding glare of North's inner 'dark' is contrasted to the external reality that, similarly, blinds Eleanor. As Eleanor notes, it is ironic that when the light starts to fade the tablecloths become whiter. As the onset of dark makes the colours withdraw so white and black assert themselves. Eleanor borrows the expressive hue of the shroud: a 'curious pallor rimmed with whiteness' (in which, as Melville writes, 'we wrap them'). Surrounded by the pallor of the living, words drift away, become lost. The living become the hollow men of whom Eliot writes:

> We are the hollow men
> We are the stuffed men
> Leaning together
> Headpiece filled with straw. Alas!
> Our dried voices, when
> We whisper together
> Are quiet and meaningless
> As wind in dry grass
> Or rats' feet over broken glass
> In our dry cellar
>
> *Shape without form, shade without colour,*
> Paralysed force, gesture without motion;
>
> *Those who have crossed*
> *With direct eyes, to death's other Kingdom*[156] (*my emphasis*)

Death finds its similitude in life. Where this leads for Eliot is to an impending sense that what has been lost is the power of 'meaningful' speech. Eliot's disembodied voices that become 'dry' are in Woolf simply 'lost'. For Woolf, behind the threat of dissolution, comes the unifying potential of thought — speech takes place merely as an interruption to thought rather than to enhance or make thought complete. It is precisely at this moment, when Eleanor turns from speech to thought, that a sense of hope returns:

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[156] Eliot, Collected Poems 1909-1962, p. 89.

There must be another life, she thought, sinking back into her chair, exasperated. Not in dreams; but *here and now*, in this room, with living people. She felt as if she were standing on the edge of a precipice with her hair blown back; she was about to grasp something that just evaded her. There must be another life, *here and now*, she repeated. This is too short, too broken. We know nothing, even about ourselves. We're only just beginning, she thought, to understand, here and there. She hollowed her hands in her lap, just as Rose had hollowed hers round her ears. She held her hands hollowed; she felt that she wanted to enclose the present moment; to make it stay; to fill it fuller and fuller, with the past, the present and the future, until it shone, whole, bright, deep with understanding.

'Edward,' she began, trying to attract his attention. But he was not listening to her; he was telling North some old college story. It's useless, she thought, opening her hands. It must drop. It must fall. And then? She thought. For her too there would be the endless night; the endless dark. She looked ahead of her as though she saw opening in front of her a very long dark tunnel. But, thinking of the dark, something baffled her; in fact it was growing light. *The blinds were white* (*TY*, 343-344)

'Here and now' was Woolf's original title for The Years. While one of the things that can be seen to be taking place is a philosophical attempt to represent the moment of the 'now'[157], in The Years this is repeatedly expressed as a borderline state linked to a notion of how thought can be communicated. If all speech is a question asking 'who am I' then how can a sense of self and of place in time be given? If the 'other life' to which Eleanor refers is an inner life, inner time (in contrast to Eliot's 'living death'), how can it be known for certain? If she cannot make this life into a concrete object, into a 'thing' which can be held up and shown then how are others to see it? Realisation of the impossibility of making thought concrete, to enclose it as an object, threatens to render the mind opaque, in endless dark. The paradox here is that it is the subjective, inner world that offers clarity. The ability to see clearly and not be 'blind' to life's uncertainties is made complex in the slippage between inner and outer realities. Nevertheless, the slippage that I am referring to here is not, as in a common reading of Woolf, stream-of-consciousness technique. What I read in Woolf is not a state of unboundedness or fluidity between sleeping and waking states but more an examination of how thought and its preoccupations remains consistent both within and between these 'two' states. In other words, between-ness in this context offers a point of unity rather than dissolution of self. In the lengthy quotation cited

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[157] In the writings of Jean-Francois Lyotard, this 'moment' is famously reflected upon as a point of unrepresentability and does, perhaps, have some bearing on Woolf's notion of a 'borderline' state in which such a moment is rendered uncertain.

above, at the moment of looking at this 'inner' dark, of trying to visualise the opacity of the mind, Eleanor opens her eyes onto the outer world, made visible by the appearance of 'white' ("the blinds were white" (*TY*, 344)). Yet its appearance only serves to make strange the dark, inner world. Must the passage between inner and outer reality render one or the other as blind? Eleanor contrasts the dark with the light: "She looked ahead of her as though she saw opening in front of her a very long dark tunnel. But, thinking of the dark, something baffled her; in fact it was growing light" (*TY*, 344). To think about thought itself, the dark opacity of the mind, is to try to think 'outside' of thought. It is at this point that Eleanor is thrust back into objective reality, into the external world. Yet if white is the extreme point of 'light' then, insofar as "the blinds were white" (*TY*, 344), Woolf offers a very subtle complexity to the way in which looking within and looking out into the external world can be seen to collide at the very moment of transition. If exposed to the mind on one side and the visual world on the other, can white participate both of the light and the dark, the inner and the outer?

Leonardo writes that white is not a colour but "has the power of receiving all the other colours"[158]. While we may draw from this that white is not a state of purity but pure receptivity there is a dialectical proposition at work here whereby pure receptivity becomes the antithesis of purity and receptivity:

> white being deprived of the light of the sun by the interposition of any other body, will remain white; if exposed to the sun on one side , and to the open air on the other, it will participate both of the colour of the sun and of the air [...] If this white were not surrounded by colours it would appear of one simple and uniform colour, viz., that of the air[159]

Leonardo writes that it is the philosophers who will not acknowledge either white or black to be colours "because the first is the cause, or the receiver, of colours, the other totally deprived of them"[160]. Yet regardless of what philosophy may claim, Leonardo reclaims the significance of

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[158] Leonardo Da Vinci, A Treatise on Painting, trans. John Francis Rigaud, (London: George Bell & Sons, 1906), p. 95.
[159] Ibid., p. 96.
[160] Ibid., p. 89.

white and black as colours for the artist – specifically for the painter. It is in a similar mode of uncertainty that Woolf appears to be questioning to what extent white can be regarded as a state of purity or to what extent it becomes purity's opposite — pure receptivity. Is white a colour or the recipient of every colour?

These questions leave us, I want to suggest, with the political agenda of The Years and the place of Woolf's 'unspeakable'. In The Years, as I have argued, the 'unspeakable' makes repeated leaps into the visual field in such statements as "don't be caught looking" (*TY*, 17) a phrase used by Eleanor at the very beginning and which is acted out on the last page of the novel where she takes heed of the warning she made some 50 years earlier. As I have already suggested, The Years is shrouded in an apparent air of secrecy: people die but their deaths are unexplained, people attend 'meetings' where nothing is reported as having been said; personal secrets abound. The reported death of Parnell strikes importance but, while silencing "the shrill clatter of birds" (*TY*, 94), in human terms is summed up as " anyhow he's dead now [...] How had he died? Had he killed himself? It wouldn't be surprising ... anyhow he was dead and that was an end of it" (*TY*, 94). The end of what 'it' specifically refers to is left unsaid. To engage in political dialogue in this text would necessitate dialogue with war, not simply death. Yet both the remnants of the first world war and the 'waiting' of the second, explicitly drawn out in Hermione Lee's biography of Woolf, go unstated. At the beginning of the novel we are witness to an overbearing sense of waiting, of "nothing to do but to look" (*TY*, 20), of "doing nothing" (*TY*, 19; 20; 37; 39). Waiting for the death of Mrs Pargiter in 1880 we are given references to a girl in white; very white faces; white patches appearing on the skin; abundance of white flowers; white portraits. To avoid speaking of death and of sucide, of war, of the political, Woolf shrouds its unspeakable configurations in a play of whiteness in the text. Yet to think only in these terms proves impossible. As I have shown, eventually the empty white world fills up with colour. It is at such moments that the question repeatedly asked in Woolf's novel, 'Where am I', is again generated by colour's process. Caught looking at a "white jug" (*TY*, 23) Delia witnesses a state of transition as it begins to turn pink: "for a moment she seemed to be in some borderland between life and death. "*Where am I?* she repeated [...] it all looked strange" (*TY*, 23).

If black and white are traditionally associated with a linear, rational way of seeing, then Woolf clearly makes uncertain such identifying principles. In the way that Kandinsky sets up black and white in his writings on the spiritual in art, the colour spectrum in Woolf's writing is represented as a ring between two poles, between black and white and between birth and death. The world is offered in all its colours as black and white go away and return. This motif of construction and reconstruction is at the heart of Woolf's vision and artistic imagination.

Chapter 3: 'Original Colour': Thinking in Dorothy Richardson's Pilgrimage

In a letter to Peggy Kirkaldy dated October 19, 1946, Dorothy Richardson hints at an element to selfhood that she refers to as "X"[1]. Getting in touch with X, she says, "throws a lurid light upon the isolated ego & brings, in varying degrees, awareness of everybody & everything. There is no end to the awareness it can bring."[2] This enigmatic statement highlights Richardson's insistent dialogue with perception and consciousness and is crucial to the themes discussed in this chapter. In the previous chapter, I examined Woolf's assertion of the futility of any attempt to replicate the essential attributes of character through realist description. 'Mrs Brown' is Woolf's proof that an element of selfhood exists but which is not visible on the surface. Richardson's 'X' is comparable to Woolf's 'Mrs Brown'. The crucial difference, however, is that Richardson's model does not rely on Woolf's hidden depth but, on the contrary, throws a "lurid light"[3] capable of transforming the surface of what can be seen and how we come to see it. What is the lurid light to which Richardson refers and how does it illuminate the ego? If light is that which makes things visible, then what quality makes *lurid*?

According to the OED, lurid is from the Latin *luridus*, meaning pale yellow. Its yellow is defined as vivid, horrible in savagery or violence, pallid in colour, glowing with an unnatural glare. In Richardson's statement, then, a savage light falls upon the ego that is coloured yellow. Levels of awareness shift the balance between a wan pale yellow and a glow that is unnatural. This is a form of movement that closely resembles the points on a monochromatic colour scale — wan and pale at one end and an unnatural glow at the other. In my reading of Pilgrimage, I will argue

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[1] Letter from Dorothy Richardson to Peggy Kirkaldy, October 19, 1946. Cited in Windows on Modernism: Selected Letters of Dorothy Richardson, (ed.) Gloria G. Fromm, (Athens & London: University of Georgia Press, 1995), p. 549.
[2] Ibid., p. 549.
[3] Ibid., p. 549.

that we can see this monochromatic scale in motion. Its effect is crucial to Richardson's model of thought and consciousness and her modernist agenda for the woman writer. Richardson's use of colour sheds new light on the pursuit of an authentic kernel of selfhood — or 'oneness' — that emerges in her writing. This is evident, I will argue, in the movement from a wan pale, yet savage yellow to an unnatural glare (or glow) made visible as an enigmatic *gold* — a "golden glow"[4] — that colours the text. Gold is defined in the OED as a deep yellow colour, sometimes with a brownish tinge. Thus, yellow, brown and gold play on a monochromatic scale. Through an analysis of the particularity of these hues in Richardson's writing, this chapter will explore her use of colour as significant and unsettling beyond seemingly conventional usage of colour terms. Getting in touch with 'X', Richardson writes, throws a lurid light upon the ego and brings awareness of everybody and everything. What is this 'X' to which she refers? Although not a reference to something deep as in Woolf, getting in touch with 'X' does, in Richardson, nonetheless seem to rest on a loss, or an unconscious act of hiding. This raises key issues of how a self is constituted through identity and how, through a process of identification with self or others, 'X' presents itself.

In my chapter on Woolf I explore a borderline zone as making visible Woolf's unspeakable. Moments between life/death, sleeping/waking are brought into the frame of writing as a coloured and visual element to the text. The stakes of Richardson's 'X', I will argue, lead to an authentic kernel of selfhood that sits uncomfortably with Woolf's more death-like 'unspeakability'. In Richardson, an authentic kernel of self emerges not as a borderline between two states but through the transformative potential of thought to escape Woolf's 'Post-Impressionist gap' and make visible a particular and authentic relation of thought to consciousness.

The relation of thought to consciousness and forms of representation is, of course, crucial to both Woolf and Richardson. In my chapter on Woolf I concede that in her early writings (To

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[4] Dorothy Richardson, Pilgrimage, 4 Vols, (London: Virago, 1979), pp. III, 287; IV, 142. (Vols I to IV of Pilgrimage hereafter cited *P.*)

The Lighthouse, The Waves, Mrs Dalloway) colour works within stream-of-consciousness. An impressionistic play of colour reveals or echoes the flow of thoughts and feelings of characters. A similar case could be argued for the early volumes of Pilgrimage. However, just as The Years signals a departure into a more philosophical exploration of colour phenomena, so I will argue that across Pilgrimage colour is crucial to an understanding of Richardson's philosophical approach to consciousness and thinking. The themes addressed in my chapter on Woolf — inner self and unity, writing and creativity — re-emerge in Richardson but within a different theoretical framework in which colour is no less central. In Woolf, the influence of Fry and Post-Impressionism in relation to colour is reworked to make visible that which lies beneath the veil of interpretation. In Richardson, colour makes visible a particular and transformative relation of thought to consciousness in which a process of alienation and recovery can be witnessed on the surface of what can be seen and how we come to see it. Richardson's use of colour leads to a transformation of the form that thinking can take and, ultimately, avoids the trap of alienation that likewise threatens in Woolf.

Richardson's narrative presents the lived experience of Miriam Henderson. The story begins with a young woman leaving the family home. Due to financial necessity, she is about to take up a post as governess at a school in Hanover, Germany. We are not witness to Miriam's early life, but from the story's beginning we are projected towards Miriam's apprenticeship to the craft of writing, a project that takes place at the same time as Richardson's working into the heart of the modernist experiment for the woman writer. As with Woolf, there is a conventional modernist reading of Pilgrimage that claims it as an example of stream-of-consciousness technique[5]. Flux and change are emphasised as a major thematic, reflected in the destabilising of character and text. While it is true that Richardson is, at times, appropriated with ease into such ideas of fragmented, non-unitary selves, Richardson's interrogation of selfhood puts forward a complex

[5] The source of the term stream-of-consciousness is made by May Sinclair with specific reference to Richardson. See May Sinclair, 'The Novels of Dorothy Richardson' in Bonnie Kime Scott (ed.), The Gender of Modernism, (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1990); and in *Little Review*, 4 (April 1918), pp. 3-11.

'unity' to selfhood, made visible through the relationship of thought to consciousness. Richardson identifies an enigmatic component to selfhood ('X') that turns upon the problem of having a notion of an inviolate part. Only through a realisation of this can Richardson's developed sense of unity be activated. A "real inside personality" (*P*, III, 192), Richardson writes, is simply "turned away from the surface" (*P*, III, 182) and looking in another direction. If this position is never realised then a self is left in conformity and the potential for life remains unfulfilled. Pilgrimage can be read as an attempt to render this inviolate part *visible* through the play of colour. The concentration of seeing with which Miriam Henderson is endowed lends a coloured and visual element to the text.

Through the interplay of gold, yellow and brown (three species of the same hue) Miriam Henderson's relation to self and world is rendered monochromatic and singular — an experience that is at once fixed yet transformative. While on the one hand Richardson identifies a side to selfhood that is constantly being erased, a persistent site of vanishing, there is at the same time in Pilgrimage a side to selfhood that remains fixed, unchanging and 'golden'. Other people are experienced as questions: "coming one after another, like questions, into [Miriam's] life" (*P*, II, 101). Yet, she says, there is "a real self that stayed the same through thing after thing" (*P*, II, 101). In Pilgrimage the voice of the 'I' is the I which communicates with "all these voices that [are] speaking at once within" (*P*, IV, 226). Miriam is certain that something intrinsic to herself remains untouched by the changes affected in her by others. Other people are incorporated in the moulding of her experience in such a way that her selfhood is transformed through the appearance of as yet unknown but fixed and permanent aspects that are revealed to already belong to it. Richardson colours this site of fixity *golden*.

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A feminist politics invested in colour

In Pilgrimage, colour performs a narrative act. Colour tells a story. It illuminates. While on the one hand colours behave as a blur of multifarious forms and degrees of visibility — reminiscent of stream-of-consciousness in depicting the general and generalisable in relation to object, mood, sensation, instability of identity — a transformation takes place in Pilgrimage in the way that colour works to make visible a new reality. We enter a visual realm that transgresses the assumed limits of writing. If, on the one hand, Richardson's project could be seen to fail in terms of its status as a visual narrative — it remains a written text — then on the other hand, what we can see taking place is a product of condensation whereby colour effects 'a change of state' to the written text that is not immediately visible. Colour forces a scene of contestation between one self and another, one state and another, one form of thinking and another, one mode of representation and another. Intrinsic to Richardson's modernist experiment for the woman writer is that she does not limit thinking, or reading, to thinking or reading only in words. Richardson's writing can be seen to work between two structures — between word and image — and, in this way, moves beyond *ecriture feminine* (a new and different language that will "surpass the discourse that regulates the phallocentric system"[6]; the presentation of subjectivity as a "colourful dance"[7] rather than the project of, for instance, James Joyce, to "dissect language"[8]) to venture into an alternative symbolic universe that anticipates the feminist position put forward by Juliet Mitchell:

> the only way you can challenge the church, challenge both the Oedipal and its pre-Oedipal, is from within *an alternative symbolic universe.* You cannot choose the imaginary, the semiotic, the carnival as an alternative to the law. It is set up by the law precisely as its own ludic space, its own area of imaginary alternative, but not as a symbolic alternative. So that, politically speaking, it is only the symbolic, a new symbolism, a new law, that can challenge the dominant law[9]

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[6] Helene Cixous & Catherine Clément, The Newly Born Woman, trans. Betsy Wing, (Minneapolis & Oxford: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), p. 253. Cited in Jean Radford, Dorothy Richardson, (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991), p. 113.
[7] Jean Radford, Dorothy Richardson, (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991), p. 110.
[8] Ibid., p. 110.
[9] Juliet Mitchell, Women: The Longest Revolution, (London: Virago, 1984), p. 391. Cited in Radford, Dorothy Richardson, p. 111.

It seems to me that the project of *ecriture feminine* would for Richardson ultimately fail in its attempt to disavow masculine discourse with a counter 'feminine' discourse. A feminist writing of this kind is not simply the property of the feminine, a signature irreducibly feminine, but is only negotiable under the terms that Judith Butler identifies in the Hegelian state of 'unhappy consciousness' between master and slave: "that signature is erased when the object is given over to the lord [the phallocentric system], who stamps it with *his* name, owns it, or consumes it in some way"[10]. Read in this light, *ecriture feminine* is a writing that is political in the context of what it disavows, the masculine. As such, it could be seen to fall into the trap identified by Judith Butler: a writing which puts itself "under erasure at the moment in which it is circulated [...] circulation here is always a matter of expropriation by the lord"[11]. Richardson says something similar in her foreword to Book I, written in 1938: the moment writing is "entrapped within the close mesh of direct statement" (*P*, 10) its fellows are summoned "to disqualify it" (*P*, 10). Richardson's project, as I will show, is more radical. Richardson's challenge to 'the law' takes place between thinking and writing as a relation between word and image that is dependent on a particular act of consciousness.

Thinking in Pilgrimage is bound up with the creative process, with Miriam Henderson's move towards the craft of writing. It is about the coming to being of a writer and, as Jean Radford notes in her early study of Richardson, events and characters correspond to much of Dorothy Richardson's own life history: the father's bankruptcy, the time in Germany as a governess, the time as a dental clerk in London, Richardson's relationships with Benjamin Grad (model for Michael Shatov) and H. G. Wells (model for Hypo Wilson), her intellectual leanings and explorations into religion and philosophy, and her move into writing[12]. In this way, Richardson's project can be seen as an attempt to write 'her self'. Pilgrimage re-creates how the writer comes

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[10] Judith Butler, The Psychic Life of Power, (California: Stanford University Press, 1997), p. 38.
[11] Ibid., p. 38.
[12] It is generally acknowledged that much of Miriam Henderson's story is based on Richardson's lived life. Pilgrimage ends with Miriam at roughly the same age as Richardson when she started to write.

to write. Radford sets Richardson's project alongside that of her contemporaries, James Joyce and Marcel Proust, in that it invites the reader to "dissect"[13] the position of the subject in language. The vital move that Richardson makes — and the most important feminist point for Radford — is through the act of writing to change any preconceived given about what it is to be a reader. Pilgrimage "articulates a new consciousness in a form designed to transform the consciousness of its readers".[14] It is here, Radford claims, that Richardson's writing is central to the modernist experiment for the woman writer: "If writing and reading help to shape the way we live, or at least shape the meanings by which we live, it is vital that the reader should play an active and collaborative role in the process"[15]. In this chapter I will readdress the relationship of writer to reader, the act of 'being read', to go beyond Radford's analysis. The transformation of consciousness that Pilgrimage designs for its readers requires a special act of discipline — a *visual* encounter with the text — to allow it to become intelligible. The *concentration of seeing* with which Miriam Henderson is endowed is thus equally dependant upon an act of consciousness on the part of the reader and, I will argue, can best be explored through Richardson's philosophical experimentation with colour.

Richardson takes her protagonist, Miriam Henderson, on a quest, a search for knowledge and revelation that is comparable to Richardson's beginnings in which she compares the act of writing to entering a metaphoric pathway: "Amongst those who had simultaneously entered it, two figures stood out. One a woman mounted upon a magnificently caparisoned charger, the other a man walking, with eyes devoutly closed, *weaving* as he went a rich garment of new words wherewith to clothe the antique dark material of his engrossment"[16]. In this citation, the heightened consciousness with which Richardson endows her protagonist seems to be inaccessible to the 'non-fictional' every-woman writer of whom she speaks: the woman "mounted upon a magnificently caparisoned charger"[17] conjures dramatic physical action and is

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[13] Radford, Dorothy Richardson, p. 116.
[14] Ibid., p. 4.
[15] Ibid., p. 5.
[16] Dorothy Richardson's foreword to Pilgrimage, written 1938, and which appears in Pilgrimage, Vol I, (London: Virago, 1979), p. 10.
[17] Ibid., p.10.

altogether different to the mode of *thinking* that is particular to Miriam Henderson[18]. Similarly, men's "weaving"[19] of words enacts a physical material relation. Richardson's image sets man in a state of reflection that is tightly woven between interiority, imagination and language: "with eyes devoutly closed [...] weaving [...] new words"[20]. This statement is taken from Richardson's preface to Pilgrimage and seems to me to be crucial in that Miriam Henderson is set apart from the two mentioned figures. Firstly, a critique of language is intrinsic to Miriam's feminism and the transition of thought into language is, for her, clearly not to be confused with processes of a 'devout' nature. As we will see, the complexity of colour and the visual in relation to thought and, subsequently, the process of writing, upsets any straightforward relation that might otherwise be seen to take place between thought and language. Secondly, for Miriam Henderson, divine experience does not depend on looking inward with eyes "devoutly closed"[21]. As I will show, the divine works to harmonise outsideness and interiority rather than as the experience of mutually exclusive realms.

In Pilgrimage itself we can once again witness the importance attached to Richardson's 'weaving' metaphor introduced in her preface. Compare Miriam Henderson: "Men *weave golden things*; thought, science, art, religion, upon a black background. They never *are*. They only make or do; unconscious of the quality of life as it passes" (*P*, III, 280). Here, a specific link is made in relation to colour. The creation of 'golden things' woven by men establishes a point of contrast with the method of production or creativity attributed to Miriam Henderson. For Miriam, gold is something enigmatically sought after: "she knew what she wanted [...] gold in her hair [...] a secret happy life" (*P*, I, 403). Gold is both visible and material yet abstract, secret and more closely allied to a spiritual dimension. In contrast, men's busy and unconscious *weaving* of gold

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[18] Here Richardson might be referring to the many women writers of her own and previous generations who turn to writing as means to direct political action, such as, for instance, De Beauvoir's Second Sex, or, indeed, many of her own journalistic writings. In Pilgrimage it is Amabel, rather than Miriam, who fulfils this role. It is Amabel who goes to prison for participation in mass rallys, such as the march to Parliament on 30 June 1908 (that Richardson rewrites as 1907); just as it is Amabel who marries Shatov and plays her part in the reproduction of the species.

[19] Richardson's foreword to Pilgrimage, Vol I, p. 10.

[20] Ibid., p. 10.

[21] Ibid., p. 10.

effects "new words"[22] emerging onto a black background and conjures a vision of Marx's alienated man at his machine; man alienated from the products of his labour: "they only make or do; unconscious of the quality of life" (*P*, III, 280). Generating new words does not break the spell of a dominated form of creativity. "Thought, science, art, religion" (*P*, III, 280) become reified forms of production rather than conscious processes effected by the creative impulse. It is this vital lost element to experience (and which I will discuss in relation to Adorno's notion of 'thinking against thought itself') that Richardson is intent to retain and restore to a conception of everyday experience and to the act of writing. The persona Richardson creates for Miriam Henderson is made distinct from the alienated weaver insofar as Miriam embraces gold as a more metaphysical quality ("gold in her hair [...] a secret happy life" (*P*, I, 403); the "golden glow [that] flowed through her" (*P*, III, 287); "her unknown self [...] that bright, goldy-brown" (*P*, III, 337); a "golden life within her life" (*P*, IV, 136)). Gold is less substance and more relative to consciousness, to Miriam's particular way of seeing the world. The Philosopher's Stone that "can be extracted from everything [...] the gift that [...] exists in each of us"[23] (Richardson's 'X') is for Miriam Henderson visible everywhere in life. It has the power to awaken and reinvigorate a sense of being. Miriam's consciousness becomes a mirror for the colours that are not found in real life; her consciousness transforms the world into a "golden glow" (*P*, III, 287) that is material but only within a specific dynamic of the spiritual. Colour has transformative potential. Miriam's consciousness is able to effect a change in the visual external landscape; London becomes steeped in a "surrounding golden glow" (*P*, III, 236). However, the problem that Richardson faces, beyond the threat of the alienated mode of being she identifies, is that this can lead to the threat of solipsism: Miriam's consciousness repeatedly threatens to turn in upon itself and reduce the external world to a mirror image of interiority. The way in which thoughts are presented to consciousness are at times unsettling and disturb the movement between inner and outer. For

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[22] Ibid., p. 10.

[23] Yves Klein, "Mon livre", section titled "Alchimi"; published in Yves Klein, cited in Sidra Stich, Yves Klein, (London: Hayward Gallery, 1995), p. 193. For Yves Klein colour is vital to his attempt to close the gap between the material and the immaterial. Klein produced about 45 "*monogolds*" using gold leaf, a substance traditionally used in the painting of religious icons during the Renaissance and one of the most expensive materials on the market. Klein's *monogolds* invoke immateriality and draw attention to a value of gold that transcends material considerations.

instance, sitting in an A.B.C café, "gazing into the fire and thinking her own thoughts" (*P*, II, 76), the traditional notion that 'thoughts come in words and is internal to the mind' is transgressed. Miriam thinks visually: "*Pictures* came out of the fire" (*P*, II, 76). Not only are Miriam's thoughts presented as pictorial images but, further, appear at once both internal and external to the mind (thinking her own thoughts [...] pictures came out of the fire" (*P*, II, 76). Thought transforms things outside herself: "the strange familiar pang gave the place a sort of consecration" (*P*, II, 76).

The battle or relationship between these two dynamics — between transformation and solipsism — is central to my reading of Pilgrimage. Richardson identifies 'golden' as the colour through which Miriam's consciousness visualises its transformative potential. Yet, acts of memory are also coloured a tarnished or dulled gold — brown or yellow — and, in these moments, what we can begin to see is Miriam Henderson drawn back into the remit of her own experience. These two forms of thinking, which set her so radically apart from others, form a moral framework upon which Miriam Henderson's 'intuitive' life depends.

The problem that Richardson identifies between alienated and transformative modes of thinking, between an intuitive and creative spirituality versus a more rational kind, is approached in her book on the Quakers:

> The artist lives to a greater or less degree in a perpetual state of *illumination*, in perpetual communication with his larger self. But he remains within the universe constructed for him by his senses, whose rhythm he never fully transcends. His thoughts are those which the veil of sense calls into being, and though that veil for him is *woven* far thinner above the mystery of life than it is for most of us, it is there. Imprisoned in beauty, he is content to dwell, reporting to his fellows *the glory that he sees*[24] (emphasis mine)

What is being discussed in this passage is the nature of the creative process. The artist is inescapably trapped within an illuminating consciousness, the other side of which must fall prey to "the veil of sense"[25] or *cens*orship. Creativity as a way of seeing or *illumination* is at once intuitive yet under constant threat from a side of the self that falls into a more conformist mode of thinking and experiencing of self and world. Seeking to avoid this trap, Richardson's writing

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[24] Dorothy Richardson, The Quakers Past and Present, (London: Constable & Co Ltd., 1914), p. 34.
[25] Ibid., p. 34.

stresses a more vivid, heightened sense of experience that is activated via a complex relationship that she identifies between consciousness, imagination and a more rational and common sense side to human nature which does not oppose them. Highlighted in the above citation is Richardson's sense of a transcendence that is immanent to experience: "a perpetual state of illumination [that] remains within the universe [...] he never *fully* transcends"[26]. If never fully, then it might be fair to ask what a partial transcendence might look like. In the relation that Richardson explores between spirit and matter in the context of *thought*, the movement between gold and yellow can be explored as Richardson's philosophical response to the question of alienation and transcendent creativity made visible.

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Gold

Gold is described as *fused* and bears several meanings. The more straightforward definition is to unite, join or become combined. To fuse can also mean the inclusion of an explosive element, and, in its original Greek, means *to cast out, to shed.* We can see the implications of both meanings in Pilgrimage. Miriam experiences two ways of seeing the world — one in the sense of projection, a getting rid of the threat of alienated selfhood or moments of experience that fall into this trap and, secondly through the transformative potential of thought to disavow alienation and unite Miriam in a sense of oneness between self and external reality. Gold is reflective and makes visible Richardson's 'X'. Nevertheless, gold appears to have an opaqueness, a density that

[26] Ibid., p. 34.

hides another side. This sense of something lurking, or hidden in colour's texture and play is referred to by Goethe. Drawing gold *from* yellow, he says: "Gold in its perfectly unmixed state [...] gives us a new and high idea of this colour; in like manner, a strong yellow [...] has a magnificent and noble effect"[27]. Gold and yellow are interchangeable as colours "nearest the light"[28]. What is interesting in Goethe's subsequent discussion on the moral association of colours is that the equal footing that he identifies *between* these tones gives way to a rupture that he identifies *within* the colour yellow: "If, however, this colour in its pure and bright state is agreeable and gladdening, and in its utmost power is serene and noble, it is, on the other hand, extremely liable to contamination, and produces a very disagreeable effect"[29]. Purity and light give way to an altogether darker possibility. It is this side of the relation between gold and yellow — the leap that Goethe identifies between 'noble effect' and 'contamination' that adds another crucial dimension to Miriam Henderson's experience. Moreover, Goethe is not the only writer to identify this critical ambivalence of gold. We can see the same 'unity' — between purity and contamination — in Pilgrimage. The etymology of 'gold' would appear to strengthen the threat of impurity or contamination that Miriam's transformative consciousness repeatedly confronts. This is a kind of 'unity' that echoes and plays into several key painterly responses to representation and fragmentation and which can be mapped onto Richardson's use of gold in Pilgrimage.

In Remarks on Colour Wittgenstein writes: "There is gold paint, but Rembrandt didn't use it to paint a golden helmet"[30]. Rembrandt's refusal of gold paint in representational painting leaves gold, as chromatic material, outside of the representational spectrum. It is in a similar vein that gold is set to work in Richardson. Her writerly move can be compared to Cubist experimentation with colour in the visual arts. There is a mathematic proportional in Cubist paintings known as 'the golden section'. This is the grid used to plan the painting and "to control dissolving and

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[27] Goethe, Theory of Colours, p. 307.
[28] Ibid., p. 306.
[29] Ibid., p. 308.
[30] Ludwig Wittgenstein, Remarks on Colour, trans. Linda L. McAlister & Margaret Schattle, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1977), p.27e.

interpenetrating coloured planes"[31]. In Cubist painting the dematerialisation of form takes place by way of fragmentation of line and colour. The 'golden grid' presents an invisible, yet viable alternative to fragmentation — a sense of unity is given to the painting that is not easily visible. The structure of Richardson's writing bears relation to the formal colourist strategies employed by Cubist painters. A repetitive sequencing of interpenetrating moments — a 'golden grid' — activates Richardson's sense of unity and defies the dematerialisation and fragmentation of form and content that constantly threatens in Pilgrimage (associated with stream-of-consciousness). Rembrandt refuses gold in representational painting; the Cubists use gold as a *hidden* unifying structure. Both strategies can be drawn out in relation to Richardson. In the previous chapter, I discuss 'Mrs Brown' as Woolf's writerly expression of the Post-Impressionist gap between character and representation. A fixed element to selfhood — that which in Woolf is unspeakable — defies representation yet is made visible as a 'borderline' and coloured zone. In Richardson, colour works as a hidden unifying structure — a golden grid that similarly defies the trap of representation.

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[31] This is discussed by George Heard Hamilton in Painting and Sculpture in Europe 1880-1940, (Penguin, 1967), p251; pp261-262. The 'golden section' in fine arts represents the proportion of the two divisions of a straight line or the two dimensions of a plane figure such that the smaller is to the larger as the larger is to the sum of the two. Another term is the 'golden mean', the middle course between extremes, and is a term advocated by Aristotle. According to Aristotle, man's 'form' comprises a soul that has a plant-like part, an animal part and a rational part. From this, he advocates three forms of happiness: the first of pleasure and enjoyment; the second a life as a free and responsible citizen; the third life as thinker and philosopher. All three criteria must be present at the same time for man to find happiness and fulfilment. It is in respect to human relationships that Aristotle advocates 'the golden mean' in terms of an ethics between deprivation and excess; a balanced and therefore harmonious life. The golden mean is the point between two extremes. With respect to *Pilgrimage* the 'golden mean', as I will go on to explore, works as a point between the extremes of mind and matter, the corporeal and the spiritual.

Intuitive colour

While the distinctions between Post-Impressionism and Cubism are significant to an understanding of the complexity of Woolf's and Richardson's use of colour, as I state in my introduction, this thesis is not strictly concerned with the potential dialogue between painting and writing. Instead, I intend to show how colour works in relation to thought; how thought is made visible. In the previous chapter, Goethe, Ruskin and Fry form the theoretical paradigm for an exploration of colour as material, mode of perception and state of mind. In this chapter, the link between colour and thought will be developed in close dialogue with the Frankfurt School. The gesture that I make towards Adorno in the previous chapter — as relevant in Woolf's critique of Fry and, subsequently, Kant — can be brought more closely into focus in relation to Richardson's engagement with forms of alienation and social domination. This will be developed in relation to colour through the writings of philosopher and literary critic Walter Benjamin and in dialogue with Howard Caygill's recent work, Walter Benjamin and the Colour of Experience.

Adorno offers us the insight that using the power of thought it should be possible to 'think against thought itself'[32]. This is a formula that evokes Richardson's exploration of thought in Pilgrimage which takes the form of a visualising narrative, and that in turn can be linked to Benjamin's work on colour. Much of Benjamin's writings are concerned with the tension between word and image. His writings on colour attempt a resolution between finite and infinite speculations on experience. As Howard Caygill states, the ambition of Benjamin's studies on perception, fantasy and colour attempt to "comprehend and recast Kant's concept of experience and to chart a new philosophical space able to contain the experience of the absolute"[33]. Benjamin brings colour into a philosophical approach to time — both 'real' time and 'inner' time — set in dialogue with what he regards as a vital tension between patterns of thinking classified

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[32] See Theodor Adorno, Negative Dialectics, trans. E. B. Ashton, (London: Routledge, 1973).
[33] Howard Caygill, Walter Benjamin: The Colour of Experience, (London & New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 3.

as everyday and a kind that is more usually associated with the realm of fantasy. His findings generate a theory of what Benjamin refers to as 'original' colour. This is a model of colour that Benjamin claims is intuitive and, as such, "is primally for itself, that is to say, it does not relate itself to things, nor even to their appearance in flecks of colour; rather it relates itself to the highest concentration of seeing"[34]. Such a form of intuitive colour, Benjamin writes, is not found in painting. Colour in painting always stands in relation to form and, as such, cannot be seen for itself but is always in relation to that which it depicts. 'Original' colour, on the other hand, is a medium of intuition that precedes forms of space and time and, as such, does not depend on reflection for its creative impulse. It is this form of 'intuitive seeing' that we will see made visible in Pilgrimage via a golden grid that dissolves the opposition between form and matter, subject and object, inner and outer.

For Benjamin, the intangible finds expression in painting in physical forms. Benjamin thus questions the ability of colour in painting to transcend its material limitations. Colour in painterly forms can only ever be a *reflection* of original colour — a *reflection* of intensive intuition that is, for Benjamin, the highest concentration of seeing. However, while in Richardson a particular 'intuitive' consciousness is modelled in a 'concentration of seeing', we might still ask whether it ever fully makes its way into the act of writing. Can the act of writing express *original* colour through the language of the text, or is colour's power (as in Benjamin's notion of painting) diminished to a 'painterly *reflection*' of intuitive seeing?

Strictly speaking, in Pilgrimage we are not directed to a locatable visual semblance or representation that exists outside the written text. To cite a clear example where the reader *is* directed outside of the text, we could, for instance, consider J.G. Frazer's (appropriately titled) The Golden Bough, a work that was highly influential among artists and writers of the modernist period and which begins: "Who does not know Turner's picture of the Golden Bough?"[35]. While

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[34] Cited in Caygill, Walter Benjamin and the Colour of Experience, p. 84.
[35] J.G. Frazer, The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion, (3rd ed), (London: Macmillan, 1911), p. 1.

Frazer's study deals with a quest to discover the meaning of the strange ritual of the priesthood — and with it the legend of the Golden Bough immortalised by Virgil — he begins with a hymn not to antiquity but to the artist J. M. W. Turner in which he sees "the golden glow of imagination in which the divine mind of Turner steeped and transfigured even the fairest landscape"[36]. By linking his major study to painting, in both conception and execution, Frazer plays the pictorial and the verbal against one another, each to illuminate the other. In Richardson's writing, in contrast, the pictorial and the verbal collude albeit in a complex fashion. The pictorial is implicit within the method of representation she is working within. The golden glow of imagination transfigures the geographical landscape of the story's content and, also, the landscape of the text itself *as* text. Referring back to Benjamin, we could argue that Frazer is creating a *reflection* of a *reflection* — the writing out of a colour that, in Turner's painting, by necessity *remains* reflected in the spiritual as its medium of construction. The *colour of intuition*, that which does not appear to relate itself to things, Benjamin claims is an impossibility for the painter. Whereas in painting colour is material substance and, as such, always stands in relation to form, this is not necessarily the case in writing. In writing it is *language* that is bound to the order of form and materiality. Yet, in Pilgrimage, colour is released from its traditional pictorial quality into a textual interplay of the visible and what Benjamin describes as the 'not (meant to be) seen'. Benjamin's intuition, lost to painting, paradoxically is found in writing. It takes refuge among words — in a relationship between image and text. A particular way of experiencing other people and places is activated via colour.

Richardson fashions Miriam Henderson as involved in a process of *making*, of transforming the world creatively (like Benjamin) into the stuff of phantasy. Miriam is endowed with a way of seeing the world that gives to it something of herself and, in the process, transforms what she sees: "something personal [...] these streets that had grown of themselves [...] pavements of gold" (*P*. III, 235-236). This form of experience, that can be equated with what Benjamin says about a child's view of things, brings into focus the tension between word and image that is so

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[36] Ibid., p. 1.

crucial in Benjamin's and Richardson's philosophy. Miriam Henderson states her decision to give up "thinking in words" (*P*, IV, 607). Language-based thinking, she states, "is cessation, cutting one off from the central essence, bearing an element of calculation" (*P*, IV, 607). The only way to avoid this situation is to "become as little children [...] those who do not calculate" (*P*, IV, 607). Like Richardson, Benjamin also emphasises children's intuitive processes. Benjamin writes that children "have no reflection (*Reflexion*), only intuition (*Schau*)"[37]. While Miriam Henderson is intensely reflexive (Pilgrimage gives a view of how life could be through the heuristic, transformative potential of the artwork) the moments of transformation that in Pilgrimage are coloured golden lie outside of reflexive judgement and depend more on the creative impulse for their power. Miriam Henderson is situated between two ways of looking — between the common sense, everyday way of looking that is familiar to other characters within the novel (for most, the only way of looking) — and an intuitive and creative way of looking that in Benjamin is equated with the child.

Time and memory are crucial to Benjamin's understanding of a child's view of things. His findings can be mapped onto the model of time and memory, as I see it, that emerges in Pilgrimage. In children, Benjamin writes: "the fantastic play of colour is the home of memory without yearning"[38]. Colour opens a door on the past that is free of desire for experience deemed lost. This is a moment of time that Benjamin calls "paradaisical"[39]. He describes it in the vision of a rainbow sited beyond the catastrophe of modernity (and of death). However, this is not a symbol of life after death but a Messianic embracing of death (and apocalypse) within the moment of experience. Benjamin writes that for adults "the yearning for paradise is the yearning of yearnings. Not the yearning for fulfilment, but the yearning to be without yearning."[40] Here, desire is locked into the confines of desire. All desire seeks to be freed from itself. Benjamin

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[37] Walter Benjamin, 'A Child's View of Colour', written in 1914, cited by Caygill in Walter Benjamin: The Colour of Experience, p. 84.

[38] Walter Benjamin, 'Notes for a Study of the Beauty of Coloured Illustrations in Children's Books: Reflections on Lyser', in Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings Volume 1, 1913-1926, (eds.) Marcus Bullock & Michael W. Jennings, (Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1996), p. 264-265. Cited by Caygill in Walter Benjamin: The Colour of Experience, p. 150.

[39] Ibid., p. 264-265. Cited by Caygill in Walter Benjamin: The Colour of Experience, p. 150.

draws on the colours of the rainbow to illustrate forms of experience deemed outside desire and self-reflexive thinking. This is a mode of perception that Benjamin associates with a child's view of things and the home of memory without yearning. Its colours, he writes, are "found nowhere in life"[41]. A symbol of dreams or phantasy[42], the rainbow points towards the future while capturing both past and future in a momentary vision "beyond all remembering and forgetting"[43]. Benjamin's *colour of experience* intimates the advent of a new law beyond the socio-technological catastrophe of modernity, one announced in the speculative excess of colour over the forms of experience in which it finds itself. This excess, Caygill writes, is not transcendent, but immanent to experience. The rainbow signals the past and yet without yearning for the past points towards the future. A transitory moment heralds something that can be glimpsed 'behind' it.

Benjamin's vision "beyond all remembering and forgetting"[44] offers a theoretical model for the way in which Richardson's particular way of seeing evolves into a philosophical paradigm. As with Benjamin, the vision that Richardson describes — encountered in the text as a golden glow — does not rely on the workings of memory but on the transformative potential of thought to redraw what is available to consciousness and perception. Intuitive thinking, phantasy and memory collide. We are witness to a moment such as this in one of Miriam's many walks through London streets:

> The treelit *golden glow* of Shaftesbury Avenue *flowed through her*; the smile of an old friend. The wealth of swinging along up the bright ebb-way of the West End, conscious of being, of the absence of desire to be elsewhere or other than herself. A future without prospects (*P*, III, 287-288, my emphasis)

Miriam's consciousness and a 'golden glow' that transforms the landscape are at one: inner and

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[40] Benjamin, 'Notes for a Study of the Beauty of Coloured Illustrations in Children's Books: Reflections on Lyser', in Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings Volume 1, 1913-1926, p. 264-265.
[41] Ibid., p. 264-265.
[42] Benjamin is making reference here to Jewish law and the Messianic. Nevertheless, this is a model of experience that he seeks to extend into a critique and rescue of modernity.
[43] Cited by Caygill in Walter Benjamin: The Colour of Experience, p. 150.
[44] Cited by Caygill in Walter Benjamin: The Colour of Experience, p. 150.

outer are unified in the precise rendering of a moment of being as it is transformed into the act of writing. It is the stuff of phantasy, of dream, of an inner life made visible. The external world is transformed into a golden glow that is both full of remembrance and yet does not rely on the workings of memory for its presence. In such moments Miriam can be seen to be free of Benjamin's "yearning to be without yearning"[45]. Past and future collide in the present moment: "Not from the past and representing it, but from the golden future and heightening its glow" (*P*, IV, 143). Inner and outer both form, and are formed by, a new consciousness. The problem that Richardson faces is that such moments are not available to reflexive judgement and, therefore, are not sustainable:

> Something always left within her that contradicted all the evidence. It compensated the failure of her efforts at conformity. Yet to live outside the world of happenings, always to forget and escape, to be impatient, even scornful, of the calamities that moved in and out of it like a well-worn jest, was certainly wrong. But it could not be helped. It was forgetfulness, suddenly overtaking her in the midst of her busiest efforts ... memory ... a perpetual sudden blank ... and upon it broke forth this inexhaustible joy (*P*, III, 288)

Here, Miriam's consciousness is linked to forgetfulness and allows a different kind of recognition to take place. The "absence of desire" (*P*, III, 287) to be other than herself is refigured as something closer to "a perpetual sudden blank" (*P*, III, 288) and would appear to contain within it the threat of alienation that Woolf recognises in realist descriptions of 'Mrs Brown'. As Woolf defies alienation in the retreat to interiority, Miriam embraces such 'perpetual' moments and transforms blankness into the kind of experience that Benjamin describes as beyond all remembering and forgetting. Alienation gives way to "inexhaustible joy" (*P*, III, 288) — a process of forgetting that is simply absence of desire.

The problem that Richardson faces, however, is that although Miriam is endowed with a way of being that is different, she remains in danger of assimilation. Miriam's involvement in

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[45] Benjamin, 'Notes for a Study of the Beauty of Coloured Illustrations in Children's Books: Reflections on Lyser', in Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings Volume 1, 1913-1926, p. 264-265.

particularised relations with other people, although it implicates her socially, is at odds with the category of the social. For Miriam, the means of synthesis between persons 'collectively' can be described in terms of a repressive tendency to master. What is at stake in revealing this fact about society — and this is a problem that Richardson faces — is that Miriam Henderson is in danger, in the very refinement of her sense of selfhood as inviolate, of simply developing a more sophisticated method for domination, a refined version of the worst tendency of social relations towards mastery. The possibility of an unknowable and yet constitutive moment of selfhood cannot be allowed by a prevailing (social) designation of selfhood that excludes what cannot be signified. This is how people are expected to be in the world and in relation to each other. While Miriam sees this problem pervading all of society, her sense is that it is, nevertheless, reversible. At least *she* relates to herself and others without covering over that which conventional identity obscures. Miriam Henderson experiences the world intensely and intuitively. She sees the world in what would be for Benjamin its *original* colours: "her unknown self. The self she was meant to be, living in that bright, goldy-brown filbert tint, irradiating the grey into which it merged." (*P*, III, 337) Richardson is not drawing a distinction here between inner and outer realities, but rather transforming that which is 'unknown' into a concentration of seeing whereby the look of colours and their being seen is the same: "*the colours see themselves*"[46]. Goldy-brown meets an unspecified 'grey' that, in Pilgrimage is associated with the everyday as mundane and with the kind of people who hold no mystery.

For instance, sharing a train carriage with "a small, shrivelled woman all grey; grey cardigan and neat grey skirt, grey hair" (*P*, IV, 133-134), Miriam sees "faded eyes, expressionless. A fading life" (*P*, IV, 134).[47] The lack of a sense of 'selfhood' that Richardson attributes to this woman is

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[46] Walter Benjamin, 'Reflection in Art and in Colour' (1914) cited in Caygill, Walter Benjamin: The Colour of Experience, p. 85.

[47] In Chroma, his paean to colour, Derek Jarman links grey to uniformity and alienated selfhood: "Grey surrounds us and we ignore it. The roads on which we journey are grey ribbons dissecting fields of colour. In the distance, the towers and spires of medieval churches and cathedrals, with their lead grey roofs, loom over village and town. Lichfield, the field of corpses. If they had colour it long since washed away. In the High Street banks, handled by little grey men, trustworthy in their uniformity, who put an ideal before self. Unthinking grey. The guardians of a grey area. Grey in their state of mind. (Chroma: A Book of Colour — June '93 (London: Vintage, 1994), p. 53).

guilty of the same misunderstanding that Woolf sees in the Edwardian realists and which she subjects to attack in 'Mrs Brown'. This woman is representative for Miriam of the kind of person for whom life "had never been made strange" (*P*, IV, 133). Her existence is "monotone" (*P*, IV, 133) and yet "without colour [...] The world, hidden under a neat grey rug" (*P*, IV, 133-134). While grey is attributed to others in general — both colour and not colour — experiencing self and world through a "goldy-brown" (*P*, III, 337) lens is unique to Miriam. This particular way of experiencing — visual and visualising — is singular and monochrome yet, unlike the grey woman, is disturbed by the suggestion of another hue. It is this vital element that marks Miriam Henderson as having a different order of consciousness to other characters in the text. The colour of intuition of which Benjamin writes is, here, "primally for itself [...] it does not relate itself to things, nor even to their appearance in flecks of colour"[48]. The unknown within the self is made visible through a chromatic action in which it is *the colours* that see themselves: "goldy-brown *irradiates* grey" (*P*, III, 337).

While Miriam's consciousness has this uniquely developed sense of unity, other people are nevertheless a constant threat to her sense of self:

> The long wide street was now all even light, a fused misty gold, broken close at hand by the opening of a dark byway. Within it was the figure of an old woman bent over the gutter. Lamplight fell upon the sheeny slopes of her shawl and tattered skirt. Familiar. Forgotten. The last, hidden truth of London [...] It was herself, set in her path and waiting through all the years. Her beloved hated secret self, known to this old woman [...] she must go on, uselessly, unrevealed; bearing a semblance that was nothing but a screen set up, hiding what she was in the depths of her being (*P*, III, 288-289)

On the one hand, what we can see taking place here is an expression of Miriam's power to endow the external world with the stuff of phantasy — 'a fused misty gold' transforms an old woman (such as Woolf's Mrs Brown; Richardson's "woman all grey" (*P*, IV, 133)) into a possible futurity that is visible in the present and made available to consciousness: "an old woman bent

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[48] Benjamin, 'Reflection in Art and in Colour', cited in Caygill, Walter Benjamin: The Colour of Experience, p. 84.

over the gutter [...] It was herself, set in her path and waiting through all the years" (*P*, III, 289). Yet, on the other hand, Richardson presents a vision that is closer to the Mrs Brown of the Edwardian realists — "unrevealed [...] a semblance that was nothing but a screen set up, hiding what she was in the depths of her being" (*P*, III, 289). Here, a chink between light and dark offers a gap through which Miriam reveals — and *sees* — herself as she might be visible to others. Miriam *is* the Mrs Brown of Edwardian realist description. Interaction with other people is a constant threat to Miriam's unique way of experiencing the world authentically. Experience is reified through contamination from those who lack Miriam's intuitive mode of thought. Her particularity is thus constantly drawn back into an alienated state of remembering/forgetting, of memory and futurity. In Miriam's encounter with the old woman we witness a fear of 'inherited' futurity, or fatality, that lurks both within her own psyche and in the way that she is formed within the psyche of those she meets: "It was herself, set in her path and waiting through all the years. Her beloved hated secret self, known to this old woman" (*P*, III, 289). Inability to express her difference will result in dissolution of self. Miriam is able to see herself in two places at once; she is able to see through two different consciousnesses — one 'beloved' the other 'hated'. In other words, Miriam is not only the Mrs Brown of realist description (Richardson's "woman all grey" (*P*, IV, 133)) but, worse, is able to see herself in this state: Miriam hovers on the precipice of realist description in which 'true' selfhood is endlessly displaced or lost. While Miriam transforms what she sees — the future is experienced in the present as a symbol of dream or phantasy — seemingly crucial is that Miriam's vision is tainted by the threat of impurity: the appropriation of her consciousness by other (alienated) consciousnesses and Miriam's awareness that this is taking place. We can see this passage as another version of Woolf's 'Mrs Brown' in which the aesthetic dilemma is internalised into the psyche of the narrating consciousness.

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'Mastering' alienation

Engaging with forms of alienation (people "unconscious of their consciousness" (*P*, IV, 132)) Richardson's writing bears relation to Theodor Adorno's theory of the dialectic of enlightenment. In the previous chapter I drew briefly on Adorno to set Woolf's critique of Fry in the Kantian tradition. Here, Adorno's writings can be seen to embody an entity or category of thought that, in Richardson, lies behind the domination of culture in ways that parallel Benjamin's approach to the 'Messianic'. In Adorno's analysis of civilised identity domination is central. The diversity and particularity of human life and its relations is suppressed. Adorno and Horkheimer write:

> Man's domination over himself, which grounds his selfhood, is almost always the destruction of the subject in whose service it is undertaken; for the substance which is dominated, suppressed, and dissolved by virtue of self-preservation is none other than that very life as functions of which the achievements of self-preservation find their sole definition and determination: it is, in fact, what is to be preserved[49]

The Dialectic of Enlightenment is a work of speculative anthropology which details the Enlightenment's development into a dominating force. Adorno and Horkheimer fuse a historical account of the development of civil society with an account of the personal development of each of the members of society who are necessarily already formed as individual identities. The motive force that binds society as identificatory is the self-preservation of the individual as the latest in a line embodying the whole. Each individual embodies the self-preservation of the whole. For Adorno as well as Richardson, once an individual is in a situation to be able to recognise their plight, they are already unavoidably embroiled in it. Individually, and as a civilisation, the development of persons involves the sacrifice of any impulsive reactions to desire in favour of compliance to social forms dictated by generalising concepts. The subtlety and power of Adorno's and Richardson's critique lies in the recognition that the excess that accompanies experience dominated in this way grounds thought without being acknowledged. In his later

work, Aesthetic Theory, Adorno develops his strategy for seeing past the restrictions on thought that such domination imposes. He does this through a development of the mimetic quality of artworks. In Pilgrimage, we see a similar tension between the intuitive and the inherited laws of the social. Both writers attempt to show the form which an acknowledgement of what lies beyond the identifiable might take. They have in common an optimism that appears in a pessimistic guise. The hidden 'object' of their enquiry appears only as a spectre or ghost to those within the sphere of the mastery of identity. It is this spectre, or ghost, that in Richardson's text is coloured golden. Recognition of the domination implicit in thought is challenged in Richardson via a chromatic making visible of Miriam Henderson's desire to escape from such thinking (whilst remaining obscured from view to those within the sphere of the mastery of identity). Colour here is a reification or embodiment of a counter-reification impulse. Miriam Henderson desperately wants to be different. At first she tries to phrase this difference directly. But it becomes clear that this is not possible:

> She felt she had a right to all the knowledge there was, without fuss ... oh, without fuss — without fuss and — emotion ... I *am* unsociable, I suppose — she mused [...] I don't like men and I loathe women. I am a misanthrope. So's pater [...] we are different — it's him and me. He's failed because he's different and if he weren't we should be like other people [...] Like other people ... horrible (*P*, I, 31)

Miriam is already, totally and inescapably a member of society. Any thought that seeks to escape domination remains under the spell of identity. Adorno offers us the insight that, using the power of thought, it should be possible to 'think against thought itself'[50] and break the spell of identity. For Miriam, thinking against thought itself takes the form of a visualising narrative, a transformation of the form that thinking can take. Miriam's life is a quest, a search for knowledge, understanding and meaning. Within this is the demand to experience a life that meets moral constraints while at the same time being morally obligated to fulfil 'a life'. This tension demands a reflective turn. However, the turn inward to experience is not so much towards a self

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[49] Theodor Adorno & Max Horkheimer, Dialectic of Enlightenment, trans. John Cumming, (London: Verso, 1979), pp. 54-55.
[50] See Theodor Adorno, Negative Dialectics, trans. E. B. Ashton, (London: Routledge, 1973).

to be articulated, but more an alignment of nature and reason, or of instinct and creative power. In Richardson, this takes place in a secondary transformation from thought into artistic material. Richardson's writing is a means to go beyond the self as usually understood.

The general insight that Richardson has regarding thought is that it is necessary to discriminate between kinds of consciousness, an insight that occurs through meditation on the problem of misrecognition. She illuminates truth as an enigma and at the same time locates an enigmatic truth at the heart of the everyday. Miriam Henderson accuses people of being "unconscious of [their] consciousness" (*P*, IV, 132). It is in this way that Richardson explores the outcome of effects for a self who, striving for life, at the same time develops a growing awareness that such strife is not universal.

Consciousness is the problem and also the site of an enigma. Miriam Henderson is different in that she opens the possibility of describing an escape for the self from its everyday state of alienation. Throughout Pilgrimage characters are portrayed in a state of misrecognition. Yet, Miriam sees people's characters, their thoughts, on the surface. She relates to others without covering over — or seeing *as* covered over — that which conventional identity obscures. For instance, sitting in an ABC café Miriam looks closely at the city men as they come and go, regarding with disdain "their amazing unconsciousness of the things that were written all over them" (*P*, II, 76). Similarly, the type Miriam encounters as governess: "sat inside a little fortress, letting in only certain people. But they did not know she could see everything inside the fortress, hear all their thoughts much more clearly than the things they said." (*P*, II, 196) Disenchanted with what she sees (and yet aware of her narrow escape from a similar destiny: "Her social position had been identical with theirs [...] If she could have stayed in all that, she would have been as far as possible just the same, sometimes ... for certain purposes" (*P*, II, 196)) Miriam tries to live a life that is different. Indeed, she is convinced that she *is* different: "To them, she was a closed book. They did not want to open it. But if they had wanted to they could not have read." (*P*, II, 196)

In the striking disparity between these two positions, Miriam Henderson vs everybody else, Richardson's critique is that people fail to recognise the different faces with which they and others move about in the world and so inhabit social forms and institutions uncritically. Thinking is shown to be inactive. Of social and moral frameworks, such as marriage, education, the church, Miriam says "there is no one on earth who knows the right and wrong of these things. There are only prejudices" (*P*, III, 495). Institutions, like individuals, are equally shown to be dualistic in what they appear to be and what they really are. In Richardson, colour has the effect of working against this form of inactive thinking. For example, following one of many lectures that Miriam attends in London, she emerges onto the street and into a "surrounding golden glow" (*P*, III, 236) that is dependent on an act of consciousness. This is a monochrome world of Miriam's own making. The lecture is left behind as her thoughts visualise (and are visualised *as*) the "recovery of certainty" (*P*, III, 236) in external reality that is Miriam's consciousness made visible:

> the pavements of these streets that had grown of themselves [...] surely pavements of gold [...]
>
> They offered themselves freely; the unfailing magic that would give its life to the swing of her long walk home, letting her leave without regret the earlier hidden magic of the evening, the thoughts that had gathered in her mind whilst she listened, and that had now slipped away unpondered, leaving uppermost the outlines of the lecture to complete with the homeward walk. The surrounding golden glow through which she could always escape into the recovery of certainty, warned her not to return upon the lecture (*P*, III, 236)

While the thoughts from the lecture are inherited thinking, the transformation that Miriam experiences on leaving this forum — a "surrounding golden glow" (*P*, III, 236) — is one of her own making and, thus, more certain. If as Miriam tells us "no-one knows anything for certain" (*P*, I, 381) then it is this process of transmutation — of meanings, or words — into gold that offers to Miriam a sense of something certain and fixed: a meaning that is unique yet always recoverable. Artificiality, or inherited meanings — the kind of thinking that holds certainty only for individuals who Miriam regards as alienated from the sense of unity and oneness that she

experiences — is counteracted via the unique quality of Miriam's own perception. Her thoughts transform the visual landscape.

However, as we have already seen, Miriam's transformative moments are not available to reflexive judgement and, therefore, are not sustainable. Richardson's efforts to get around the problem of duration generates a further point of tension. In the citation above Miriam emerges onto the London street and into a "surrounding golden glow" (*P*, III, 236). The golden glow that is Miriam's "escape into the recovery of certainty" (*P*, III, 236) brings with it an altogether different thought process in which we can see Miriam in the act of trying to turn intuition into tuition: it is this very 'golden glow' that "warned her [thoughts] not to return upon the lecture" (*P*, III, 236). The kind of intuitive thinking that is particular to Miriam Henderson — and its transformative, or projective, quality — can be seen to hover on the border of mastery in her very attempt to sustain the transformative moment. Once thinking takes this step it is no longer intuitive but back somewhere in the realm of common sense, or, a way of thinking that asserts power over a more intuitive kind that is negated in the very act of trying to maintain it. Miriam's vital and intuitive way of thinking retreats: "the glow had gone [and] the objects about her grew clear" (*P*, III, 236). The process of shifting between these two poles of thought plays out between Benjamin's intuitive mode of perception versus a more reflexive turn and is a tension that pervades much of the novel.

These two modes of thought — intuitive versus a more reflexive thinking that Richardson closely allies with forms of alienation and mastery — are central to Richardson's feminism. Against the latter, Miriam Henderson seeks to suppress or reject "the temptation of gathering things that had been offered by another mind" (*P*, III, 236). The store of ideas offered by attending lectures (or innumerable other experiences of a similar kind) are couched in the language of common sense and are, she says, "things to which [Miriam] had no right" (*P*, III, 236). Her feminism demands she question to what extent the linked statements of the lecture are "her proper concern" (*P*, III, 236) or "yet another step upon a long pathway of transgression". (*P*, III, 236) Given that Henderson's feminism is slowly muted by the end of the novel, we could

read this in terms of the need to protect the 'intuitive' self I describe. Here, to transgress would appear to be to move closer to convention. The form and content of the lecture tempts Miriam into a move away from the quest for selfhood via intuitive experience — the colouring of words and things with her own consciousness — and into the realm of *inherited thinking*. It is here that the subtlety and power of Richardson's critique is located, in the complexity of Richardson's thought regarding human relations and in her use of colour as a viable route into the complexity and impasses of 'thinking'. As I have stressed, Richardson identifies two modes of thinking, intuitive and common sense thought. In the textual examples under discussion, the threat of alienation from (or efforts at mastery over) intuitive thinking constantly lurks. In the encounter with the old woman Miriam recognises a side to self that falls into conformity through interaction with others — her "beloved hated secret self, known to this old woman" (*P*, III, 289). In the description of the lecture we are witness to an 'other side' to her transformative consciousness that tries to control it and threatens to negate her particular quality of intuitive intensity in the process.

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'Lighting' thought

Up to now I have been discussing thought in particular relation to consciousness and the way in which colour, as I see it, offers a route into Richardson's concerns about the potential for a way out of alienation and mastery. I now want to develop these themes into a broader philosophical context in which Richardson's feminism sets colour in dialogue with the Western metaphysical tradition and the privileging of *light* in male-centred discourse. Setting colour in dialogue with

light offers a way to develop the themes under discussion. For instance, recall the earlier citation in which Miriam establishes the threat to her consciousness posed by other people: "the treelit golden glow" (*P*, III, 287) transformed into "all even *light*, a fused misty *gold*, broken close at hand by the opening of a *dark* byway" (*P*, III, 287-288) in which an "old woman [...] Familiar. Forgotten" (*P*, III, 287-288) looms. Here, Richardson's transformative thinking fuses light with dark through the moment of colour. Light is no longer privileged. As we will see, 'light' works on a number of different levels in relation to time and memory and figures in Richardson's approach to creativity and writing. Richardson sets thinking in relation to light shed *artificially* and an altogether different kind of light that comes from within. This tension grounds Richardson's use of colour in relation to her feminist agenda: thinking becomes a way of 'shedding light' not in the traditional sense of a metaphysics of light but drawn out through the play of colour in the text.

The significance of light in Western thought, from Plato onwards, has been charted in a recent work by Cathryn Vasseleu, Textures of Light: Vision and Touch in Irigaray, Levinas and Merleau-Ponty[51]. Broadly defined, in the history of Western metaphysics, invisible light is the light of ideas, speculation, revelation and divine illumination; visible light is the light of observation, empirical evidence and knowledge. Both forms of light are linked to truth and vision. Richardson does not participate in what could be referred to as a history of light. Neither does she, as does Irigaray and many French feminists, privilege a more feminine 'touch' over vision. Where Richardson steps over the boundary of the metaphysical tradition is in that she

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[51] Vasseleu's introduction brings together key philosophical moments in changing conceptions of light. She draws attention to the work of Hans Blumenberg and his identifying a change in light's significance that occurs with modern enlightenment thinking. Going back to Descartes, Vasseleu writes, natural light has its source in God and possesses a perfect symmetry with the mind. Engaging with contemporary philosophy, her introduction draws on the writings of Jacques Derrida and his claim that metaphors of light "are constitutive of the language of philosophy", the history of philosophy being inseparable from a history of light. Vasseleu reads Derrida's take on philosophy as "a complex interplay of concept-metaphors" with light as the concept-metaphor of which truth can be made to appear or become present to consciousness". Vasseleu, Textures of Light: Vision and Touch in Irigaray, levinas and Merleau-Ponty, (London & New York: Routledge, 1998).

gives light *colour*. The primary status accorded to light is given over to the more usually secondary status of colour. Crucial to Vasseleu's project is her notion that there is no discourse in existence of a feminine investment in light. But what happens if we turn to a feminist discourse invested in colour?

In Pilgrimage themes of light and dark are linked to notions of time and space, to memory and futurity and are crucial themes through which to explore Richardson's feminism. These concerns appear from the first pages of Pilgrimage. From the opening of 'Pointed Roofs', the first of Pilgrimage's thirteen stories, Miriam draws the reader into a world of light and dark, into a world lit artificially and a darker place that is self-lit and conducive to thought. The novel opens: "Miriam left the gaslit hall and went slowly upstairs [...] the staircase was almost dark. The top landing was quite dark [...] She would have time to think about the journey and decide what she was going to say to the Fräulein. (*P*, I, 15) Her journey into an unknown is about to begin. Here, dark rather than light is empowered with vision and illuminating qualities (this is a tension that will be developed in my chapter on spirituality and Richardson's Quakerism). Also at work in this opening sequence to the novel is Benjamin's tension between intuition and reflexive states of consciousness. Miriam's 'unknown' is an unknown that she tries to master: "she would have time to [...] decide what she was going to say" (*P*, I, 15). Sitting in her darkened room, barely able to see the familiar shapes of objects, thoughts of the past fleetingly stir. Yet, we are told, "There was no escape for her thoughts in this direction" (*P*, I, 15). In these opening paragraphs the tone of the novel is set. Memories do not project Miriam Henderson into the past but into a future that is experienced in the present. Richardson's all-encompassing treatment of modernism's preoccupation with temporality allows the construction of a new topography. By the end of the novel, we are witness to the transcendental subject dissolved into the temporal landscape of its objects: "golden light, falling upon deserted roadway [...] deepened by the glow of the hours from which she had come forth" (*P*, IV, 173).

Temporality in Pilgrimage is often compared to the modernist project of Marcel Proust. While Richardson claims Proust to be involved in "a vastly different enterprise"[52] to her own, similarities can and have been drawn. Jean Radford sets Miriam's apprenticeship to the craft of writing alongside that of Marcel in Proust's A La Recherche du Temps Perdu. Gloria Fromm in her biography of Richardson writes: "For both of them [Richardson and Proust] the past was a world to which they went forward rather than back, thus making of it a future that would one day be present."[53] Jacqueline Rose agrees with Fromm and puts Richardson alongside Proust in a discussion of futurity and the idea of "a past still moving in the present — a past running ahead of its time"[54]. Both Fromm and Rose's notion of time in Pilgrimage ("a future that would one day be present"; "a past running ahead of its time") can be refigured within the context of Benjamin's paradaisacal duration in which time is no longer strictly linear. Caygill explores Benjamin's writings on colour as approaching a "paradisiacal duration"[55]; that is, a model of art that is no longer suspended between past and future, between Messianic and apocalyptic. In Benjamin's concept of modernity the "landscape of time in which the 'I' is threatened with dissolution"[56] paves the way for a new law beyond the catastrophe of modernity — this is explored as the *colour* of experience and is a move away from a metaphysics of light associated with a particular sense of futurity and its association to the project of the Enlightenment.

In Pilgrimage these themes can and have been drawn through Richardson's characterisation of Hypo Wilso, an intellectual and literary socialite who triggers some of Miriam's most fierce

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[52] Gloria Fromm, Dorothy Richardson: A Biography, (Chicago & London: University of Illinois Press, 1977), p. 153.
[53] Fromm, Dorothy Richardson: A Biography, p. 153. Cited in Jacqueline Rose, 'Dorothy Richardson and the Jew' in States of Fantasy, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p. 126.
[54] Rose, 'Dorothy Richardson and the Jew' in States of Fantasy, p. 126.
[55] Caygill, Walter Benjamin: The Colour of Experience, p. 150.
[56] It is interesting to point out here the extremity of Richardson's manipulation of form in relation to the time-scale of *Pilgrimage*. Miriam Henderson develops as an almost interminable repetition of moments of reality which are placed next to each other in a manner allowing communication — not simply between each and its closest neighbour — but between each, and *all* other moments. There are enough moments in this very long work to make the result seem an infinity of possible communicative potential. The threat of the senseless in each moment of this work and, by implication, in the relation of each moment of time to every other — in which the "I" is constantly threatened with dissolution — is the powerful motive force behind the critical intent of *Pilgrimage*. Richardson exerts just enough control of this mass of instances to avoid regress into relativism and senselessness. One can identify a similar level of extremity in Beckett's manipulation of form, although insofar as Richardson as it were pushes in the opposite direction to Beckett (she 'fills' narrative time rather than emptying it) her work appears to be more conventional.

feminist responses. As is well known, Wilson is modelled on H. G. Wells (Richardson's friend and one-time lover). One of the novel's central characters, Wilson is pivotal both to aesthetic debate in Pilgrimage and, in the context of Richardson's feminist agenda, to her refusal to privilege 'light' over colour. Much of Wells's writing foregrounds a utopian vision that depends on past, present and future. Against this, Richardson figures an approach to time that is closer to Benjamin's 'paradisiacal' duration. Against Wells's utopian vision of a race moving forward Richardson sets the individual. Hypo's words introduce Miriam to "miracles of illumination" (*P*, IV, 361). Yet she is nevertheless haunted by "the insufficiency of [his] theories to encompass reality"(*P*, IV, 360-361). Hypo's plan amounts to a personal idea of progress that denies concession to the personal, to everyday living. His work conjures in Miriam:

> a sort of anxiety, a sense of a vast number of people being overcome by his magic and misled, ignoring the gaps in his scheme of salvation [...] believing themselves satisfied with a picture of humanity travelling, a procession of dying invalids, towards the ultimate extinction [...] towards a larger, better-equipped death chamber (*P*, IV, 361)

Earlier in Pilgrimage, the nature of such forms of thinking is described in colour terms:

> the forward march of a unanimous, light-hearted humanity along a pathway of *white morning light* ... The land of promise that she would never see; not through being born too soon, but by being incapable of unanimity. All these people had one mind (*P*, III, 237-238, my emphasis)

The 'white morning light' that Miriam rejects draws parallels with a citation from The Years in which my analysis of Woolf's borderline zone situates 'white' in relation to moments of time. Recall Eleanor: while seeking to "enclose the present moment" (*TY*, 344) she is drawn back against her will into a 'white' light in which the external world and an altogether different level of consciousness causes the present moment to "drop" (*TY*, 344). Eleanor's effort to preserve oneness and unity dissolves. Whereas in Woolf white is transgressive in that it relates to dark ("the ***blinds*** were white" (*TY*, 344)), Richardson's critique is developed in the context of light. White is associated in Woolf with death-like unspeakability. In Richardson, the association more strongly figures in her feminist critique of an alienated and male-centred view of things and against Wells's Hegelian march of progress towards "one mind" (*P*, III, 238).

Again, Richardson faces a problem in the feminist critique she sets up. In her quest to uncover the truth of things Miriam is constantly returned to a way of thinking that is alien, masculine:

> It was clearly not her fault that she had a masculine mind. [...] Still, it was *strange* [...] that without any effort of her own, so very many different kinds of people and thoughts should have come, one after the other, as if in an ordered sequence, into the little backwater of her life. What for? To what end was her life working by some sort of inner arrangement. To turn, into a beautiful distance outspread behind her as she moved on? (*P*, III, 236-237)

Here, Miriam faces a threat of alienation that is firmly placed within a gendered discourse. While the masculine element is clearly delineated, Miriam goes on to establish a form of thinking that is different. As with Woolf, (and as we will see in Beckett and Eliot) we are introduced to 'inner time': "an ordered sequence [...] her life working by some sort of inner arrangement" (*P*, III, 236-237) — a "golden life within her life" (*P*, IV, 136). The picture that Richardson creates recalls to mind the Cubist golden grid and hidden unity to fragmentation of form and content: Miriam sees her life as "working by some sort of inner arrangement [...] outspread *behind* her" (*P*, 237). A layering of moments of time challenges the more usual linear arrangement associated with Enlightenment thinking. Against her own sense of thoughts spreading out *behind* her, Miriam sees the kind of people who project their thoughts into the future. This is a way of seeing she invests with revulsion, alienation, and sets within a male centred discourse of the kind identified with Hypo Wilson.

Wilson's (and by default Wells's) idea of progress, against which Richardson makes her call, can be witnessed in Wells's earliest novel, The Time Machine (1895), a social allegory of the class system set in the year 802701. It conjures a vision not only of biological regression but of the basic confrontation between man and death seen in colour imagery, as a polarisation between lightness and darkness. Colours are set in violent opposition, polarised between on the one hand the Doomsday connotations of eclipse black and fiery red and the ghostly white figures of the Morlocks, and on the other the green and bright colours of the utopian garden and sunlit landscaped vegetation inhabited by the Eloi. Wells performs a colouristic translation of the

opposition between tamed and untamed, safety and danger, evolutive and devolutive nature. Humans evolve into two species — the leisured classes into the 'beautiful people' of the Eloi, weak and dependent for their survival on the working-class Morlocks, underground nocturnal cannibals and predators. Progression shows itself as a black future that stands in stark contrast to Wells's socialist utopian alternative. The '*Golden Age*' anticipated in The Time Machine is a false reading of the future and disintegrates into a vision that is black and blank. Miriam rejects the 'white light' of futurity in the same way that she rejects a vision of the future painted black and blank. It is perhaps with Wells's violent colour opposition in view, his reading of the Golden Age as black and blank, that Richardson writes: "Men *weave* golden things; thought, science, art, religion, upon a black background. They never *are.* They only make or do, unconscious of the quality of life as it passes [...] Men have no present [...] that would explain their *ambition* ... and their doubting speculation about the future" (*P*, III, 280). Against the white of futurity — "the land of promise that [Miriam] would never see" (*P*, 237) — or the future black and blank speculated by Wells, Richardson paints a different sequence of events:

> At the foot of the stairs stood the yellow street light, framed, in the oblong of the doorway. She went out into its shelter [...] The illuminated future faded. The street lights of that coming time might throw their rays more liberally, over more beautiful streets. But something would be lost. In a world consciously arranged for the good of everybody there would be something personal ... without foundation ... like a non-conformist preacher's smile. The pavements of these streets that had grown of themselves, flooded by the light of lamps rooted like trees in the soil of London, were more surely pavements of gold than those pavements of the future? (*P*, III, 235-236)

The land of promise is dissociated from any sense of futurity or of Benjamin's 'yearning'. In this respect, the particular way of seeing with which Richardson endows her protagonist embraces Platonic artificiality and transforms it into a sense of a divine essence that is possible for everyday experience. The future is illuminated artificially. Miriam sees it as a "faded" (*P*, 235) yellow. Against this she sets a gold — a Golden Age or 'golden grid' (both equally harmonising motifs) — that is crucial to experience 'now', to the kind of experience deemed lost in modernity. Richardson regards that which is *woven* as constituting a veil, a fabric of mediation between the immanent and transcendent. Recall Miriam Henderson's feminist position: "Men *weave golden things*; thought, science, art, religion [...] unconscious of the quality of life as it passes" (*P*, III,

280). Setting the 'weaving' of gold against her Benjaminesque realm of gold suggests, at least, that gold is sited ambiguously by Richardson. 'Weaving' is the fabric of sense, or of *cens*orship and is one side of things that belongs to the realm of everyday, or rational thought.

While Miriam is discontented with the common-sense, everyday, cosmopolitan and political world, she is, perhaps, nevertheless resentful that the experiencing of *golden* moments could so interfere, by their contrast, with this part of her life and a side of her that is secretly hating. Just as she assumes her golden life to be inaccessible to others, so there is an assumption that the part of Miriam that is hating goes unseen — or is not meant to be seen — by other people. Other characters are ignorant of Miriam's "golden womanhood" (*P*, III, 242), the "golden life within her life" (*P*, IV, 136). So, similarly, it goes unknown by others that she sees them as 'unconscious' of their consciousness, as "skeletons [...] not real" (*P*, I, 391). Setting the two sides of Miriam's nature side by side, what we see is that Miriam's golden life can, at times, light up the horrors of consciousness and turn a grotesque, deathly yellow. Miriam repeatedly cites death as a yellow spell: she talks of people dying slowly from a "small yellowish constitution" (*P*, I, 332). Her dying mother, we are told, is caught under "the spell of the yellow curtain" (*P*, I, 480) that divides the living from the dead, a yellow that could be "felt" (*P*, I, 480) as she envied the people on the other side of it. Her mother dies in a room "yellow with daylight" (*P*, I, 487). Yellow with death. Miriam is terrified of a similar fate. She fiercely rejects the type of girls who, she says, "would repeat the history of their mother" (*P*, II, 196). Of her father and mother, she says: "Get along, old ghosts [...] Her father and mother, whose failure and death she had foreseen as a child with sudden bitter tears, were going on now step by step towards these ghostly things" (*P*, I, 426) and conjures an image reminiscent of Wells's unanimous death march.

What we can see in these instances is that gold becomes threatened with impurity, with 'yellow'. Light and dark (on the monochromatic scale from a golden glow to a wan pale yellow) become metaphors for the seen and the 'not meant to be seen'. What begins to emerge is a more disturbing component, beyond the trap identified through Adorno on mastery, to the idea of a secret, visualisable realm of the self which, similarly, has far-reaching social consequences. This is

a set of relations that invites a psychoanalytic engagement with the themes so far discussed via Benjamin. As with Woolf, so in Richardson the theme of colour begins to uncover, or unsettle, aspects of selfhood that can be subjected to this kind of analysis. I have argued that gold makes visible a sense of unity for Miriam Henderson — her sense of self as being at one with her surroundings. However, recall that getting in touch with 'X' throws a lurid light upon what Richardson describes as "the isolated ego" [57] and effects a monochromatic scale from yellow to gold. In the move towards yellow we are introduced to aspects of Miriam that hints at a part of self that is rejected or disavowed. Miriam's golden life meets Miriam as outsider and pulls her towards a more disturbing 'yellow' end of the spectrum.

At the outset of Pilgrimage Miriam ventures out into the world to earn a living following the bankruptcy of her father. She expresses contempt for wealth and the capitalist system of exchange in terms of a yellow hue — she speaks of a jeweller's window that repels her: "The jeweller's window repelled her. It was very yellow with gold, all the objects close together and each one bearing a tiny label with the price" (*P*, II, 75). Contrary to Miriam's consciousness that turns things to gold, here, gold is reduced to a system of wealth ("horrid gold coins" (*P*, IV, 214). Gold is a coveted product of adornment or exchange and represents all that Miriam Henderson's consciousness rejects. Gold in this form is reduced to a foul yellow colour. We can see the stakes of this move in the context of broader social implication. Goethe draws attention to bankrupts (such as Miriam's father) as wearing yellow hats. He makes a link between the bankrupt and the Jew in the context of each having to display the same derogatory yellow hue:

> When a yellow colour is communicated to dull and coarse surfaces, such as common cloth, felt, or the like, on which it does not appear with full energy, the disagreeable effect alluded to is apparent. By a slight and scarcely perceptible change the beautiful impression of fire and gold is transformed into one not undeserving the epithet foul; and the colour of honour and joy reversed to that of ignominy and aversion. To this impression the yellow hats of bankrupts and the yellow circles on the mantles of Jews, may have owed their origin[58]

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[57] Letter from Richardson to Peggy Kirkaldy, October 19, 1946. Cited in Windows on Modernism: Selected Letters of Dorothy Richardson, p. 549.
[58] Goethe, Theory of Colours, p. 308.

Goethe stresses gold in terms of beauty and sites yellow as its opposite: "an epithet foul"[59]. The link between gold and yellow that Goethe identifies can be drawn out through the complex relation that Miriam shares not only with her father (and, as cited earlier, her mother's death) but also, like Goethe, in relation to the Jew. Miriam develops an intense relationship with Russian Jewish émigré, Michael Shatov. Early in their acquaintance Miriam regards Shatov as "a shabby, sinister-looking Tottenham Court Road foreign loafer, in yellow boots, an overcoat of an evil shade of brown". She is embarrassed. Even once this figure has turned into 'Mr' Shatov, she sees "evil" (*P*, III, 54) eyes in his "yellowish" (*P*, III, 54) face. Again, there are broad social implications at work here which raise questions of Richardson's relation to anti-Semitism. As in the earlier citations in reference to death, what is made plain here is that Miriam's golden can, at times, light up the horrors of consciousness and turn a grotesque, deathly yellow. Miriam's ambivalent positioning in relation to anti-Semitism is there in her vision of the 'yellow' Jew: "What *were* Jews?" (*P*, III, 127). Shatov is at once yellow Jew and yet has potential for deeper meaning, both "evil" (*P*, III, 54) and in possession of a gleaming "brilliant beauty" (*P*, III, 54) that gestures towards Miriam's sense of his consciousness as possessing a 'golden' quality similar to hers. Shatov's eyes hold "serene communion with his surroundings" (*P*, III, 128) that is a quality of experience Miriam senses in herself. Nevertheless, the Jew is sited ambiguously.

Richardson's positioning of the Jew as evil, yellowish, is at best problematic given the politics of the time. Her citing of the 'yellow' Jew looks sinister when set against a statement made by Miriam about a German national: she sees Hartopp, "half German" (*P*, III, 380) as "the yellow young man [...] the best kind of German [...] Not yellow" (*P*, III, 380-381). This could, however, be read another way as a positioning of the Jew alongside the non-Jew: "half German"/half-Jew, "yellow"/"not yellow" (*P*, III, 380-381). This yellow-not-yellow young man, Miriam says "could prevent war with Germany, if he could be persuaded to waft to and fro" (*P*, III, 380-1), presumably between yellow, not yellow. In Hitler's Germany the Jew wears the yellow star and is made scapegoat (and symbol) for the gold-coveting capitalist: "accused of being the

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[59] Ibid., p. 308.

embodiment of cosmopolitan — that is, infinitely mobile, infinitely corruptible — capital"[60]. Recall the earlier link between yellow and gold made in a context that is suggestive of a derogatory embodiment of the Jew/jeweller — the Jew *as* jeweller or pawnbroker: "The jeweller's window repelled her. It was very *yellow* with *gold*" (*P*, II, 75, my emphasis). Not only is gold as product of capital and exchange subjected to scorn but suggests the role of the Jew in this process. Miriam becomes involved with Michael Shatov, a Russian Jewish immigrant, while at the same time harbouring a complex relation to German nationalism before and after Hitler's rise to power. Given these connections as they can be explored through the theme of colour, an altogether different level of histor(ies) can be seen to emerge in Pilgrimage. Miriam Henderson's consciousness identifies with the Jew as outsider (of course, Miriam is a Jewish name) while at the same time rejecting the Jew as outsider. Here, the transformative potential of Miriam's consciousness (she sees Shatov as in possession of a "brilliant beauty" (*P*, III, 54)) is drawn back into a hating and more alienated way of being in which the Jew is "evil [...] yellowish" (*P*, III, 54).

Explored in a psychoanalytic context, this set of connections might lead to a more 'unspeakable' realm as discussed in relation to Woolf. Through the repetition of a yellow hue, what we can begin to see emerging is a dialogue with outsideness and death-like unspeakability. However, while in Richardson colour can lead to a form of thinking that suffers from this kind of censorship, unlike in Woolf, Miriam's 'golden' is set to work differently. Richardson offers a creative experience of colour through the transformative potential that gold enacts. Richardson creates in Pilgrimage a visual landscape in which Miriam's particular and creative way of experiencing things has at least the potential to harmonise with a more everyday mode of thought. Again, it is through a psychoanalytic turn (one that works as a development from my reading via Benjamin) that we can see this taking place. The complex interweaving of two modes of thought that Richardson explores (transformative versus alienation, mastery, censorship) can be mapped onto ideas about how the dream and the dreamer might reference psychic landscapes

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[60] Rose, 'Dorothy Richardson and the Jew', in States of Fantasy, p. 120.

and how this might appear to consciousness and forms of representation. Developing Richardson's visual landscape into psychoanalytic models of dreaming has real connections back to Benjamin — "*the colours see themselves*"[61] — and is introduced here by way of conclusion rather than a new approach to the themes already under discussion.

In an essay by Jean-François Lyotard, '*The dream-work does not think*'[62], Lyotard identifies how, in the dream work, one field of expression takes its categories from another in a move that goes round the side of censorship and renders visible the text's unspeakable elements:

> The dream cannot be made to speak? Then we will try to make discourse dream. That is more accurate, closer to what really happens, and I am convinced that the figure dwells in discourse like a phantasm while discourse dwells in the figure like a dream[63]

As in the dream-work, Richardson takes us to the realm of the image. If, as in the dream, this is an image that cannot speak, then can we likewise come at Richardson's text from the opposite direction — does Richardson's discourse *dream*?

In the following citation from Pilgrimage it would appear that this is Richardson's intention. She writes:

> [Miriam] was surprised now at her familiarity with the details of the room ... that idea of visiting places in dreams. It was something more than that ... all the real part of your life has a real dream in it; some of the real dream part of you coming true. You know in advance when you are really following your life. These things are familiar because reality is here. Coming events cast *light*
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> (*P*, II, 13)

At issue here is a state of consciousness that is comparable to dreaming and yet is "something more than that" (*P*, II, 13). This is a model of dreaming that includes within it elements of real

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[61] Benjamin, 'Reflection in Art and in Colour' (1914), cited in Caygill, Walter Benjamin: The Colour of Experience, p. 85.
[62] Jean Francois Lyotard, 'The dream-work does not think' in The Lyotard Reader, (ed.) Andrew Benjamin, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989).
[63] Ibid., p. 33.

life. At the same time and, importantly for Miriam Henderson, real life contains within it elements of the dream. While the former is perhaps not unusual (Freud states quite clearly that dreams contain the residue of the previous day's experiences), the latter is a state of consciousness that applies particularly to Miriam's 'golden' experiences and is a level of consciousness that has radical implications. Attention is drawn in the above citation to the casting of 'light' that makes a further link back to Richardson's refiguring of light (as already discussed) in colour terms. Contrary to the light of futurity that Richardson associates with a unanimous death march or oneness of mind (the forward march of a unanimous, light-hearted humanity along a pathway of white morning light [...] these people had one mind (*P*, III, 237-238)), the way the 'golden dream' takes hold of real life — and vice versa, real life transmuted into dream — brings us back to Benjamin's paradaisacal duration and the Messianic. The present is known to consciousness in that a sense of futurity is always already inherent within it. Marion Milner, a practising psychoanalyst, sets this approach to questions of time in particular relation to the dream. She writes: "the bit of oneself that one could give to the outside world was of the stuff of one's dreams, the stored memories of one's past, but refashioned internally to make one's hopes and longings for the future"[64]. Again, here we can witness Benjamin's colliding of past and future in the present. It is almost in identical terms that Richardson states: "all the real part of your life has a real dream in it; some of the real dream part of you coming true [...] reality is here" (*P*, II, 13). There is a real sense that what Miriam encounters in the external world is Milner's '*bit*' of herself: "the stuff of [her] dreams, the stored memories of [her] past, but refashioned internally"[65].

Freud writes that dreams "are nothing more than a particular *form* of thinking"[66]. Dreams occur to the sleeper as images. On waking, and in the psychoanalytic exchange through which dreams undergo analysis, dream images are translated into language. Central to Freud's work on dreams is that their *essence* is not found in the latent content of dream-thoughts. It is the process of the

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[64] Marion Milner, (Joanna Field), On Not Being Able to Paint, (Oxford: Heinemann, 1950), p. 26.
[65] Ibid., p. 26.
[66] Freud, The Interpretation of Dreams, in The Standard Edition, V, p. 491; cited in 'The dream-work does not think' in The Lyotard Reader, p. 20.

dream-work, Freud ascertains, that sets this discourse (between latent and manifest content) on a path of transformation: "dreams are nothing more than a particular *form* of thinking [...] It is the *dream-work* which creates that form, and it alone is the essence of dreaming."[67] On Freud's model, it is not therefore the relation of word to image that is set in dialogue, but the process of a transformation of psychic material that such an encounter enables. This model is a useful one for the method of reading, or looking, being performed in this chapter — between word and image. The process of Freud's dream work can be compared to the act of transformation that Miriam's 'golden' consciousness performs. Miriam Henderson establishes her own reality, the 'golden dream' made manifest in the text. Miriam makes language *dream*. In an almost theological turn Miriam senses that it is the city, London in particular, that holds the promise of the kind of life she seeks. It is here that her consciousness and the everyday world vibrate in a harmony of coloured tone: she walks along "golden streaming Regent Street [...] the pavement of heaven" (*P*, I, 416). She brings to her view of things a substance — a *coloured* substance — of her own experience. While there is a flip side to this, as I have argued, that is coloured yellow and points towards a more death-like unspeakability such as in Woolf, there is a side to Miriam's consciousness and the places she encounters that becomes in Milner's words "the haunts of the gods"[68], or go(l)ds. It is the unity of seeing the world through these two separate, yet harmonising and monochromatic, frames, that gives to Pilgrimage its power and critical intent.

In Richardson's writing we enter a visual realm. With respect to colour this is a domain, strictly speaking, that is reserved for the painter. Richardson's transgression, if indeed it is one, takes us on a journey that winds up back somewhere in the realm that Lyotard identifies in his concluding statements to the essay on Freud's dreamwork and which brings us back to Benjamin's notion of colour and phantasy:

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[67] Sigmund Freud, 'The Interpretation of Dreams' in The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, ed. James Strachey et al. (London: Hogarth Press, 1953-74), V, p. 506. Cited in The Lyotard Reader, p. 20.

[68] Milner, On Not Being Able to Paint, p. 28.

> Reverie, dream, phantasm are mixtures containing both viewing and reading matter. The dream-work is not a language; it is the effect on language of the force exerted by the figural (as image or as form). This force breaks the law. It hinders hearing but makes us see: that is the ambivalence of censorship. But this composite is primordial. It is found not only in the order of the dream, but in the order of the 'primal' phantasm itself: at once discourse and figure[69]

In Pilgrimage, it is this complex inter-relationship between reverie (thought), dream, phantasm, between viewing and reading, discourse and figure, that 'breaks the law' in Lyotard's sense and restates the feminist agenda set out at the beginning of this chapter. Richardson writes that Miriam's life is "the battlefield of her two natures" (*P*, III, 250). As I have argued, these two natures are made visible on a monochromatic scale from yellow to gold. In the contradictory moves that repeatedly sets male against female, gentile against Jew and which is made visible via similarly conflicting stages of transformation and alienation and the war between word and image, Richardson's 'golden grid' defies the fragmentation of form and content that constantly threatens both in relation to the subject and the act of writing.

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[69] Lyotard, 'The dream-work does not think' in The Lyotard Reader, p. 51.

Chapter 4: 'The Agony of Colour': Anxiety Made Visible as Beckett's 'New Object'

Standing in front of a painting by Bram Van Velde, Beckett asks: "For what is this coloured plane, that was not there before. I don't know what it is, having never seen anything like it before. It seems to have nothing to do with art, in any case, if my memories of art are correct"[1]. In this citation, Beckett could be accused of making a critical response to abstract art. However, given that Van Velde was one of his closest friends and a painter whom Beckett greatly admired it would appear that the stakes are much higher. Beckett's fundamental concerns about the nature of art and the creative process can be seen to emerge in the uncertainty triggered by a "coloured plane" (*PD*, 126). Beckett sees something that is unfamiliar and yet more than that. There is a quality to Van Velde's paintings that is outside of Beckett's capacity (as viewer) to determine.

In this chapter, I will discuss how Beckett's response to Van Velde is crucial to an understanding of his conception of art and the creative process and to the predicament of the artist as he defines it in relation to himself and others. I will explore the ways in which this statement feeds into the sense of his own failure and, from here, I will argue that a similar "coloured plane" (*PD*, 126) emerges in Beckett's writing which contradicts his conviction that expression is an impossible act[2] and draws Beckett's question — "what is this coloured plane" (*PD*, 126) — back into the frame of his own writing. The reader (or viewer) of Beckett's texts, as I see it, is confronted with a visual aspect to the writing that is unrecognisable and unsettling. Reading Beckett invites his own question: "For what is this coloured plane, that was not there before" (*PD*, 126).

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[1] Samuel Beckett, Proust and Three Dialogues with Georges Duthuit, (London: John Calder, 1965), p. 126, (hereafter cited *PD*)

[2] Beckett famously states: "to be an artist is to fail, as no other dare fail, that failure is his world and the shrink from it desertion, art and craft, good housekeeping, living" in 'Three Dialogues' in Disjecta: Miscellaneous Writings and a Dramatic Fragment, (ed.) Ruby Cohn, (New York: Grove, 1984), p. 145.

In my chapters on Woolf and Richardson I argue that sacrosanct private spaces — the unspeakable in Woolf; an inviolate element to selfhood in Richardson — make suggestive links beyond the clearly referenced motifs and autobiographical elements of their writings. I explore a hidden depth to selfhood in Woolf's writing that, in Richardson, is made visible on the surface. While my reading of Beckett leads on from this, it is distinct in that what interests me is a 'hallucinatory' quality to the writing that is neither depth nor surface. Woolf's unspeakable and Richardson's inviolate element to selfhood activate a sense of unity between subject/object, inner/outer — made visible through the theme of colour as Woolf's borderline zone, Richardson's dreamscape in which Miriam Henderson's transformative consciousness can be seen. Whereas in Woolf and Richardson a philosophical uncertainty is inherent within the activated sense of unity they describe, for Beckett, uncertainty is all there is. All that can be represented is the 'anxiety' that stems from the impossibility of any relation of subject/object, inner to outer. In Woolf, I have explored the theme of colour as making visible a 'gap' or 'borderline zone' and thus activating a moment of unity between subject/object, inner/outer. In Richardson, Miriam Henderson's transformative consciousness harmonises this set of relations. In Beckett, a 'hallucinatory' quality to the writing allows an altogether different kind of inflexion to emerge. Rather than unifying, colour activates the 'anxiety' that, for Beckett, governs all subject and object relations and the gulf between inwardness and exteriority. Colour makes this anxiety visible. Through an examination of the way in which Beckett's writing is saturated with questioning, exploiting and redrawing this given it can be argued that colour sets free the unrepresentable in Beckett's writing in ways that both resemble and contrast with the themes explored in Woolf and Richardson. Colour lends an obsessive and emotionally charged visual element to the narrative.

Beckett's position is clearly set out in a well-known series of dialogues on art with critic Georges Duthuit, their subjects Tal Coat, Masson and Bram Van Velde. To quote Beckett: Tal Coat is

accused of working on an enlarged version of "the plane of the feasible" (*PD*, 103), of naïve realism; Masson is an artist who, being in search of the void, makes it "impossible that he should ever do anything different from that which the best, including himself, have done already" (*PD*, 112). Beckett situates Tal Coat and Masson as seeking justification on the same plane: "literally skewered on the ferocious dilemma of expression" (*PD*, 110) of past artists who Beckett sees as working within "the old subject-object relation"[3]. Theirs is an art in the pursuit of occasion and is an artistry that Beckett sees as flawed. To be in pursuit of occasion is to 'go in search' of a form and means of expressing; to seek to express interiority in the external object. Beckett's own predicament as an artist *not in search of* occasion both generates and is constituted by anxiety. As Ruby Cohn writes, Beckett is haunted by the Cartesian cleavage "between the world *in re* and the world *in intellectu*"[4]. By necessity, therefore, Beckett identifies an unstable relationship between artist and art work. Rather than a verifiable subject and object united through an objective, verifiable "occasion"[5], Beckett situates the 'anxiety' that results from the impossibility of any such relation. Anxiety is all that can be expressed: "all that should concern us is the acute and increasing anxiety of the relation itself, as though shadowed more and more darkly by a sense of invalidity" (*PD*, 124). It is here that the work of Bram Van Velde reveals to Beckett what Tal Coat and Masson cannot: "Van Velde is the first whose painting is bereft, rid if you prefer, of occasion in every shape and form, ideal as well as material, and the first whose hands have not been tied by the certitude that expression is an impossible act"[6]. To admit that to be an artist is to be doomed to failure can, on Beckett's model, enable "a new occasion, a new term of relation [...] an expressive act, even if only of itself, of its impossibility, of its obligation"[7]. It is through Van Velde's use of colour that Beckett witnesses the terms of this new occasion, "the new

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[3] Samuel Beckett, *The New Object* in Bram Van Velde, catalogue from Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre George Pompidou, (Paris: Spadem, 1989), p. 166.
[4] Ruby Cohn, 'Philosophical Fragments in the Works of Samuel Beckett', in Samuel Beckett: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Martin Esslin, (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1965), p. 170.
[5] Samuel Beckett, Disjecta: Miscellaneous Writings and a Dramatic Fragment, (London: John Calder, 1983), p. 143.
[6] Ibid., p. 143.
[7] Ibid., p. 143.

object"[8] and, I will argue, it is itself made visible in Beckett's writing as a coloured plane that redraws the relation between the inner (creative) mind and the outer world and its preoccupation in Beckett's critical and fictional writings.

In her paper 'The True-Real', Kristeva outlines a psychoanalytic case study that takes the colour green [*vert*], as it is elaborated in the transference, as opening the door to what she terms a "hallucinatory signifier"[9]. Taking this as my point of departure, I will argue that the seeds of a hallucinatory *object* (the kind of object that Beckett experiences in front of Bram Van Velde's paintings) are made visible in his writing. Kristeva's signifier does not correspond to an object: "the speaking subject in search of the 'true-real' no longer distinguishes between the sign and its referent in the usual Saussurian way, but takes the signifier for the real (treats the signifier *as* the real)"[10]. In this little discussed essay, Kristeva explicates how during analysis "the enigmatic recurrence of an image, a word"[11] emerges as an interpretative trigger for what she defines (in relation to the analysand) as "a sensation that was indefinable but always linked to certain moments of great intensity: the recurrence, in fact, of the colour green [*vert*]"[12]. This "blinding moment"[13] of the colour green, she says, corresponds to "no object, not even to the word green itself"[14]. Green does not signify, green is not the property of an object, and, if 'blinding', green is not visible. On the level of sensation, green is recurrent and intense yet indefinable, enigmatic and resistant to specific, concrete experience.

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[8] The term "new object" is one that Beckett directly uses in relation to Van Velde and will be discussed in more detail in the following pages of this chapter: *The New Object* in Bram Van Velde, catalogue from Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, (Paris: Spadem, 1989).
[9] Julia Kristeva, The True Real' in The Kristeva Reader, (ed.) Toril Moi, trans. Seán Hand, (Oxford UK & Cambridge USA: Blackwell, 1986), p. 229.
[10] Toril Moi, 'Introduction' to 'The True-Real' in The Kristeva Reader, p. 214.
[11] Kristeva, 'The True-Real', in The Kristeva Reader, p. 228.
[12] Ibid., p. 228.
[13] Ibid., p. 228.
[14] Ibid., p. 228.

In this chapter, I will argue that a recurrence of the colour yellow acts as an interpretative trigger which maps moments of great intensity in Beckett's fiction to aspects of his personal life and intellectual influences. As a colour, yellow in Beckett's writing is inseparable from (Kristeva's 'hallucinatory') green (green and yellow emerge as two species of the same hue and will be traced as such throughout this chapter.) It is widely acknowledged that the subject(s) of Beckett's early fictions draw upon people and events from his lived life. While Kristeva's piece is not about biography but is using a psychoanalytic case study that takes the colour green as symptomatic of a hallucinatory discourse, the links that she makes offer fruitful comparison to significant points of dialogue between biographical details of Beckett's life and his early fiction. My method will differ from the chapters on Woolf and Richardson in that I will navigate a psychoanalytic reading that reaches back into Beckett's familial history and forward to the famous Beckettian 'wombtomb', with colour routed into Beckett's psychoanalytic sittings with Wilfred Bion and his recollection of intrauterine experiences. Colour also activates another set of links — or hallucinatory 'objects' — that extend between Beckett and his intellectual influences, not only Van Velde but into the poetics of Kierkegaard, a philosopher to whom Beckett often turned, and into Beckett's famous dialogues with Proust on the subject of time and memory. Once placed in such a framework, the threat of unrepresentability in Beckett's writing, his claim — "the certitude that expression is an impossible act" (*PD*, 121) — starts to evanesce. Something becomes, via colour, anxiously representable despite itself. Beckett is drawn into the artistic stage he sets for Van Velde: one in which a "new occasion" (*PD*, 125) can be seen to emerge. Objects can be sought in Beckett's writing and to some extent found. Nevertheless, as I will show, the object is endlessly displaced. 'Anxiety' emerges as Beckett's 'new object', coloured and made visible.

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Hallucinating subject / hallucinatory object

The vocabulary of Dutch painter, Bram Van Velde, places Kristeva's the *true* and the *real* within the same context as the invisible, the unknown. He writes: "The invisible life depicted on the canvas is more real than what people regard as real life [...] If these gouaches live at all, it is because they are true, they derive from life. They are born of the unknown"[15]. The spatial relations made explicit in this statement between the psychic domain and external reality, between subject and object, are refigured by Beckett in terms of colour: "For what is this coloured plane, that was not there before. I don't know what it is, having never seen anything like it before. It seems to have nothing to do with art, in any case, if my memories of art are correct" (*PD*, 126). A sense of inner time and 'real' time are brought into conflict in the way that the coloured plane is shrouded in ambiguity. Van Velde's paintings are, predominantly, compilations of multicoloured 'planes'; form and colour is freed from subject. The paintings do not appear to seek an essence of their 'object' and, as such, have been referred to as subconscious forms where "reality is no more than an unrecognisable memory"[16]. In what way — and to whom — is this memory unrecognisable? For Beckett, the status of Van Velde's painting is reduced, or indeed complexly expanded, into coloured planes that fail to signify. What is visible on the canvas cannot be reconciled with inner experience and raises the question: how can the colours of the spectrum 'without' bear relation to the coloured spectrum 'within'? Its effects are sought unsuccessfully in memory and appear to invoke a stage prior to the identification of (art) objects. In this way, it can be argued, Van Velde's coloured planes excite in Beckett a 'hallucinatory object'.

In the dominant tradition of Western painting, strictly speaking colour is located only as an attribute

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[15] Charles Juliet, Conversations With Samuel Beckett and Bram Van Velde, trans. Janey Tucker, (Academic Press Leiden, 1995), p. 56; p. 65.

of the figurative system. In the breakaway into abstraction, colour provided the spearhead of non-representational art. Colour and form were perceived as autonomous. Yet this is not to say that colour in modern art is 'hallucinatory'. On the contrary, for example, Matisse sets down the sensations of colour "to interpret nature"[17]; Kandinsky developed a colour scheme that split colour into male and female principles and sought to express the spiritual in art; Cézanne used colour to express the effects of objects. Endless questions circulate amongst artists, art historians and critics on the effect and materiality of colour. Yet attempts to determine colour's allotted place within a theory of representation are fraught with ambiguity and disagreement.

Beckett writes that traditional painting which consists mostly in pictorial fidelity to the object is made obsolete by the work of artists Geer and Bram Van Velde. What he identifies in the work of these Dutch brother-artists is their going in "very different ways, on the same search, the search for an object"[18]. Drawing inspiration from what he regards as a precondition of their work, that the object of representation is at all times in resistance to representation, Beckett identifies a set of relations that he hails as 'the new object'[19]. To illustrate his claim Beckett draws analogy between the Christs of Roualt, still-life of Matisse and conglomerate of Kandinsky in 1943/44. These works, he says, all proceed from the same effort: "the effort to state that in which Christ, a potato and a *square of red* are one, and from the same distress, the distress before the refusal of that oneness to be stated"[20]. Against the grain of Post-Impressionism, Beckett writes that it is absurd to speak of a painting freed of the object. Rather, what painting is freed of is "the illusion that there is more than one object of representation, perhaps even of the illusion that this one object of representation is

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[16] Catalogue of Works: Bram Van Velde, Knoedler Galleries, (New York: Pozzo, 1962).
[17] Cited in John Gage, Colour and Culture: Practice and Meaning from Antiquity to Abstraction, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1993), p. 211.
[18] Beckett, *The New Object*, in Bram Van Velde, p. 166.
[19] There has been little attention paid to Beckett's article on the Van Veldes and his definition of the 'new object'; the significance of colour in this relation has not been investigated. Critic John Pilling says of Beckett's 'new object': "Form, it must be stressed, is still retained, but it will be a form unlike anything ever seen before, and the content which it shapes, and which shapes it, will be equally new, since the process of perception and representation has been fundamentally altered. The artist's aim and the realisation of that aim stand now in an essentially problematic relation to one another", in Samuel Beckett, (London: Routledge, 1976), p. 20.
[20] Beckett, *The New Object*, in Bram Van Velde, p. 166 (my emphasis).

representable. Object is another word that speaks for itself"[21]. If the history of painting is the history of its relation to its object, then what remains to be represented if the essence of object is to elude representation? For Beckett, what remains is the conditions of that elusion:

> These conditions will appear in one of two ways, according to the subject. The one will say, I cannot see the object to represent it because the object is what it is. The other, I cannot see the object to represent it because I am what I am[22]

The new object is the anxiety that situates itself between these two opposing mists. Beckett situates Geer van Velde as an artist of the first kind and Bram van Velde of the second. Where Geer situates the conditions of his predicament "without"[23], outside of himself, Bram's predicament is situated "within himself"[24]'. Beckett analyses the direction of the 'without' as moving toward light and void. This kind of artist, he says, "finds resolution in weight, density, solidity, in a devouring of the without by the conditions of the without, light and emptiness"[25]. We take cognizance of time, Beckett says, "only through the things that it agitates, that it prevents us from seeing".[26] Geer Van Velde cannot see the object because "the object is what it is"[27]. By giving himself entirely to the outward world, by revealing the macrocosm shaken by the tremors of time, Beckett says, Geer Van Velde realises that man "in his most immovable being"[28] is certain that "there is neither present nor repose. His [Geer Van Velde's] work is a representation of that river into which, according to the modest estimate of Heraclitus, no man ever steps twice."[29] When a man steps into the river for the

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[21] Ibid., p. 166.
[22] Ibid., p. 167.
[23] Ibid., p. 167.
[24] Ibid., p. 167.
[25] Ibid., p. 167.
[26] Cited in George Duthuit, The Fauvist Painters, (New York: Documents of Modern Art, Wittenborn, Schutz inc., 1950), p. 5.
[27] Beckett, *The New Object*, in Bram Van Velde, p. 167.
[28] Cited in George Duthuit, The Fauvist Painters, pp. 5-6.
[29] Ibid., pp. 5-6.

second time, neither he nor the river are the same. This is the basic philosophy of Heraclitus (c. 540-480 B.C.) who holds that all things are in perpetual flux. The basic characteristic of nature is that all things flow and that it is in constant flux and movement. This constant state of transformations, Hecaclitus claims, is the foundation of universal reason and constitutes a one-ness that he terms God, or *logos*. According to Heraclitus everything is characterised by its opposite. And so, in opposition to Geer Van Velde stands the art of Bram Van Velde. The 'without' is confronted by an inner chronology akin to that which Beckett identifies in Proust. Bram cannot see the object because "I am what I am"[30]. The works of Bram Van Velde function according to the laws of "inner time"[31], a sense of time which, Beckett says, moves in the dark, in "the immovable masses of a being shut away and shut off and turned inward for ever, pathless, airless, cyclopean, lit with flares and torches, coloured with the colours of the spectrum of blackness"[32]. If the art of Geer Van Velde emerges from white light, from the external world, the paintings of Bram Van Velde emerge from inner blackness. It is the semblance, or its impossibility, of these two perspectives that situates Beckett's 'new object'. What Beckett sees as important in the work of the Van Velde brothers is a refusal to accept the "old subject-object relation"[33]. Where this leads is to acceptance of the absence of any relation. The conventional, hierarchical sense of object of representation is absent. In its place is anxiety — the new object— which stakes its claim in Beckett's fictional writing through the role of colour.

Central to the dialogue Beckett initiates between the work of Bram Van Velde and Geer Van Velde, his brother artist, is Beckett's use of colour to follow a philosophical model of 'anxiety'. The artist's anxiety emerges from a refusal to accept "the old subject-object relation"[34]. Although different, as with Woolf, this argument is also a critique of Post-Impressionism. What Beckett sees in the Van

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[30] Beckett, *The New Object*, in Bram Van Velde, p. 167.
[31] Ibid., p. 167.
[32] Ibid., p. 167.
[33] Ibid., p. 167.
[34] Ibid., p. 167.

Veldes mobilises the boundaries between mind and memory in a way that liberates art from conventional strategies and expectations. Whereas Woolf and Fry appear to collude with Kandinsky — that through colour spirituality in art is possible, and desirable — Beckett suggests otherwise. Beckett's art refuses to be *about* something but rather seeks to *be* that something. This is the route of the coloured plane that he identifies in the work of the Van Veldes. Setting his creative predicament alongside that of Van Velde, Beckett states his own inability to desist from "estheticised automatism" (*PD*, 125) and to "submit wholly to the incoercible absence of relation" (*PD*, 125) between representer and representee. This inability, he writes, places him in "an unenviable situation, familiar to psychiatrists. For what is this coloured plane, that was not there before. I don't know what it is, having never seen anything like it before. It seems to have nothing to do with art, in any case, if my memories of art are correct" (*PD*, 126). Requoting Beckett in this fuller context stresses the link he is making to a possible disorder of the psyche ("[…] an unenviable situation, familiar to psychiatrists" (*PD*, 126)) and shifts the emphasis more towards a plane existing in Beckett's mind, one that seeks semblance with a meaningful representational form. Yet this statement can be reread once more. If the coloured plane does, in fact, have nothing to do with art then what is the unknown '*it/It*' — "I don't know what it is, having never seen anything like it before. It seems to have nothing to do with art" (*PD*, 126) — that Beckett confronts? To what might 'it' refer and how might it find expression?

Clive Bell and Roger Fry structured their response to this question in terms of 'significant form' and a Kantian notion of 'aesthetic emotion'. The act of creating, to create something rather than seek it, brings us face to face with something which does not yet exist yet gives to itself its own reality and substance. Beckett's relation to occasion and to modernist concerns of inner and outerness responds with the impossibility of finding a viable ground on which to express the most basic of human emotions — tragedy, ecstasy, despair — and is a philosophy more in the tradition of Søren Kierkegaard when he writes:

> The point in reflective grief is the fact that sorrow is constantly seeking its object; this search is its life and the secret of its unrest. But this search is a constant fluctuation, and if the external were in each separate moment a perfect expression for the internal, it would be necessary to have an entire series of pictures to represent it; but no single picture could express it, and no single picture would have essential artistic value, since it would not be beautiful but true. The pictures would have to be regarded as one regards the second-hand of a watch; the works themselves are not visible, but the inner movement constantly expresses itself by the constantly changing positions of the second-hand. This change cannot be represented artistically, and yet it is the gist of the whole matter. Thus, when unhappy love has its ground in a deception, its pain and suffering are due to its inability to find its object[35]

Kierkegaard is a philosopher to whom Beckett often turned. His sensitive link between time, suffering and the search for an object, as with Van Velde, imprisons the *true* within the same context as the invisible. Again, as with Van Velde, in Kierkegaard's writing time, suffering and the search for an object come together in an "agony of colour"[36]. For instance, in 'Diapsalmata', the first volume of Either/Or, Kierkegaard describes the reminiscence of childhood painting as an elegiac means of pulling together seeing and feeling in a medium that is now lost to him. Reflected in this piece of writing is, essentially, an attempt to link the aesthetic and the ethical in one intensely personal and psychologically complex philosophical statement, where the object he seeks is *colour*. Kierkegaard writes:

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[35] Soren Kierkegaard, 'Shadowgraphs' in Either/Or, Vol. 1, trans. David F Swenson and Lillian Marvin Swenson (Princeton, J.J.: Princeton University Press, 1971), pp. 176-177.

[36] This is a phrase that Beckett adopts in Proust and Three Dialogues, to describe the narrator's experience on arrival at a hotel room in the Grand, Normandy. In this context the "agony of colour" is the narrator's relation to new and unfamiliar external surroundings. Until his unfamiliarity abates and warms towards the silence that accompanies *habit*, then sleep and a retreat towards inwardness is impossible, see p. 24.

> How strangely sad I felt on seeing a poor man shuffling through the streets in a rather worn-out, light yellowish-green coat. I was sorry for him, but the thing that moved me most was that the colour of this coat so vividly reminded me of my first childish productions in the noble art of painting. This colour was precisely one of my vital hues. Is it not sad that these colour mixtures, which I still think of with so much pleasure, are found nowhere in life; the whole world thinks them harsh, bizarre, suitable only for Nuremberg pictures .... And I, who always painted my heroes with this never-to-be-forgotten yellowish-green colouring on their coats! And is it not so with all the mingled colours of childhood? The hues that life once had gradually become too strong too harsh, for our dim eyes."[37]

In Kierkegaard, we come face to face with the question of how colour functions in memory. Are colours assigned to memory from the external world or does the mind create its own colour spectrum? Can the colours of the past maintain their intensity in the present or does memory bring with it a process of fading? Kierkegaard's lost colours habitually return in Beckett's writing and, as in Kierkegaard, are complexly linked to memory, time and suffering and the search for an object. Kierkegaard's yellowish-green coat — "this never-to-be-forgotten yellowish-green colouring"[38] — mischievously and repeatedly unsettles Beckett's narratives. A whistlestop tour of such illuminating moments introduces us to *Yellow*, a short story in More Pricks Than Kicks (1934) and the place where Belacqua dies (a character found in Dante's inferno and who reappears throughout Beckett's writings). Murphy, a man who lives in fear of losing "his yellow"[39] stalks London in a lemon dickey bow and a suit that "was not green, but aeruginous" (*M*, 44). Indeed, Murphy's suit could almost *be* one of the paintings that Kierkegaard refers to when Beckett writes: "much size must have entered into its composition" (*M*, 45) ('size' is a sealing agent used for preparing surfaces for painting). Watt wears a "greatcoat"[40] that is noticeably "still green here and there" (*W*, 217). The coat, having once belonged to Watt's father, and a block hat that belonged to his grandfather, together pose a challenge

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[37] Cited in Riley, Colour Codes, p. 17, from Kierkegaard, Either/Or, pp. 22-23.
[38] Cited in Riley, Colour Codes, p. 17, from Kierkegaard, Either/Or, pp. 22-23.
[39] Samuel Beckett, Murphy, (London: Picador, 1973; first publ. London: Routledge, 1938), (hereafter cited *M*).
[40] Samuel Beckett, Watt, (London: John Calder, 1963; first publ. Paris: Olympia Press, 1953), (hereafter cited *W*).

to time and memory which, as in Kierkegaard, is set in colour terms and, specifically, green and yellow:

> It was to be observed that the colours, on the one hand of this coat, on the other of this hat, drew closer and closer, the one to the other, with every passing lustre. Yet how different had been their beginnings! The one green! The other yellow! So it is with time, that lightens what is dark, that darkens what is light. It was to be expected that, once met, they would not stay, no, but continue, each as it must, to age, until the hat was green, the coat yellow, and then through the last circles paling, deepening, swooning cease, the hat to be a hat, the coat to be a coat (*W*, 217)

Here, again, as with Kierkegaard, the search for an object (and loss of objects) is defined in colour terms, or, more exactly, green and yellow. Beckett draws colour into a dialogue on the ageing process and the theme of death: "through the last circles paling, deepening, swooning cease, the hat to be a hat, the coat to be a coat" (*W*, 217). Once colour departs, death, or nothingness, sees her opportunity. Kierkegaard's "hues that life once had"[41], the childhood colours that "become too strong too harsh, for our dim eyes"[42] reappear in Watt as colours moving towards cessation and death yet, as in Kierkegaard, are retained in memory. The greatcoat — at one point green, another yellow (and no longer a coat) — peppers Beckett's writing. It is a garment worn during the *Great* War and is a constant reminder of death and dying. Molloy closely watches two men in greatcoats go in opposite directions while also wearing a greatcoat of significant introduction: "it is neither of my hat nor of my greatcoat that I hope to speak at present, it would be premature. Doubtless I shall speak of them later, when the time comes [...] Unless I lose them between now and then. But even lost they will have their place, in the inventory of my possessions"[43]. Here, the reference to death is made explicit. The greatcoat will outlive Molloy and take its place in the inventory of the dead man's

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[41] Cited in Riley, Colour Codes, p. 17, from Kierkegaard, Either/Or, pp. 22-23.
[42] Cited in Riley, Colour Codes, p. 17, from Kierkegaard, Either/Or, pp. 22-23.
[43] Samuel Beckett, 'Molloy' in Molloy, Malone Dies, The Unnamable, (London: John Calder, 1994; first publ. 1959), p. 14.

possessions "when his time comes"[44]. The greatcoat suggests continuity across disparate characters, novels and moments of time and yet, at the same time, does so in reference to death and dying. For instance, in *The Calmative* (1946) a man walks the streets in a "long green greatcoat"[45] such as was "wore about 1900, my father's [...] the same great dead weight"[46]. In *One Evening* an old woman goes in search of flowers to place at the head of a clothed skeleton lying on the ground: "Yellow only"[47]. Known only as 'he', 'him', 'it', the skeleton is "inconspicuous in the greenish coat"[48] and hat. "May she have seen him somewhere before?"[49] we are asked.

Kierkegaard's certainty of having 'seen something before' is, for Beckett, shrouded in uncertainty. Likewise, uncertainty challenges the reader as the figure in the 'greenish coat' is encountered across Beckett's fiction. Links can be made and yet the coat and its bearers remain elusive. The aura of uncertainty is echoed in colour terms. The "never-to-be-forgotten yellowish-green colouring"[50] of Kierkegaard's childhood heroes are found in Beckett as visions of 'greenish', 'green' and 'not green'. Green is a colour made from yellow. Yet as far back as antiquity, yellow has been thought as a light species of green — the ancient philosophy of Democritus states that yellow and green are two species of the same genus of hue. Kierkegaard's description suggests a man who, moving through time, is subject to a process of fading, of becoming worn-out. The memory of the "hues that life once had"[51] reach back to a utopian image of childhood, an image that reveals a way of seeing deemed lost[52]. As our vision recedes into the future, the man in the street is transported back into a world that exists only as a fiction, as a representation of its own reality. Are the vital hues that

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[44] Ibid., p. 14.
[45] Samuel Beckett, The Complete Short Prose 1929-1989, (ed.) S. E. Gontarski, (New York: Grove Press, 1995), p.64.
[46] Ibid., p. 65.
[47] Ibid., p. 253.
[48] Ibid., p. 253.
[49] Ibid., p. 253.
[50] Cited in Riley, Colour Codes, p. 17, from Kierkegaard, Either/Or, pp. 22-23.
[51] Cited in Riley, Colour Codes, p. 17, from Kierkegaard, Either/Or, pp. 22-23.
[52] This links to Richardson's 'intuitive thinking' and the way in which, as I define it in relation to Benjamin's notion of a child's view of things, it forms a critique of modernity.

Kierkegaard's image conjures ever to be found in real life, past or present? Are Kierkegaard's "vital hues [...] found nowhere in life"[53] the reflection of an inner sphere or a recalled childhood impression of the external world, deemed lost?

The return to childhood perception — or its impossibility — suggests an almost primitive colour sense in Kierkegaard's statement. This is the tone throughout his philosophical writings, not in pursuit of thought as system but as something infinitely more enigmatic. Kierkegaard reflects on the result of his life as "simply nothing, a mood, a single colour"[54]. Life is seen as a minimalist canvas, a modern monochrome when, again in Either/Or, he says that the result of his life is like the painting of the artist who was to paint a picture of the Israelites crossing the Red Sea: "To this end, he painted the whole wall red, explaining that the Israelites had already crossed over, and that the Egyptians were drowned"[55]. The subject is both present and absent. Its past resides in a hidden realm. Kierkegaard's sensation of a past lived life, or of death, is rendered visible only in monochrome.

In the previous chapter, I discuss the monochrome as it can be seen to emerge in Pilgrimage on a scale from a golden glow to a wan pale yellow. In Richardson, we see links to memory, experience and death. We can also see the stakes of a *monochrome* experience in Beckett's famous essay, 'Proust and Three Dialogues'. In this essay Beckett examines Marcel Proust's perspectivism as an "*inner* chronology" (*PD*, 11). What is this sense of *inner time* and how does it function? The narrator of Proust's In Search of Lost Time invites the reader to share a journey of recollection, from the emergence of a single memory trace into a history of temporal experience. Proust establishes two frames of memory, voluntary and involuntary. Voluntary memory is the home of the intellect. It

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[53] Cited in Riley, Colour Codes, p. 17, from Kierkegaard, Either/Or, pp. 22-23.
[54] Kierkegaard, Either/Or, Vol 1, p. 28.
[55] Ibid., p. 28.

stores information about the past yet preserves "nothing of the past itself"[56] and holds no trace of actual experience. It is the "uniform memory of intelligence" (*PD*, 32) and can be relied on to reproduce impressions of the past that were consciously and intelligently formed. Involuntary memory has access to the past yet cannot be freely witnessed. Conjuring involuntary memory is reliant on an element of chance. According to Proust, the past is "hidden somewhere outside the realm, beyond the reach of the intellect, in some material object (in the sensation which that material object will give us) of which we have no inkling. And it depends on chance whether or not we come upon this object before we ourselves must die".[57] Seemingly crucial is that Beckett interprets Proust's time and memory in colour terms. Voluntary memory, he says, has "no interest in the mysterious element of inattention that *colours* our most commonplace experiences. It presents the past in *monochrome*" (*PD*, 32). The terms of Beckett's 'new object' — anxiety — is missing here: "the material that it furnishes contains nothing of the past, merely a blurred and uniform projection once removed of our anxiety and opportunism — that is to say, nothing" (*PD*, 32-33). Likewise, the individual's "fluid of future time" (*PD*, 15) is "pale and *monochrome*" (*PD*, 15). Only decantation within the process of involuntary memory renders experience "agitated and *multicoloured*" (*PD*, 15; my emphasis). Involuntary memory is an "unruly magician" (*PD*, 33-34), the stuff of alchemy.

Beckett's colouring of Proust's voluntary and involuntary memory is illustrated in his response to the paintings of Bram Van Velde. His relation to these works is as viewer and critic. What he lays claim to is that, unlike any other paintings he has witnessed before, involuntary memory appears to be at work in the creation. The viewer (in this case himself) is unable to identify with, or appropriate, the movements of colour within the artworks. A writer/critic faces what would appear to be a similar encounter in Proust's In Search of Lost Time. At the beginning of Book I, the narrator describes

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[56] Marcel Proust, Rembrance of Things Past: 1, trans. C K Scott Moncrieff & Terence Kilmartin, (London: Penguin, 1989), p.47.
[57] Ibid., p. 48.

Combray as two floors reduced to a "sort of luminous patch"[58] of wall. Julia Kristeva draws attention to this 'luminous patch' in her lengthy study of Proust[59], where she points out that Combray's reduction to a luminous patch is brought about by the ill-timed appearances of M. Swann, the author of the narrator's sufferings, and marks the break between 'Combray I' and 'Combray II'. The residue of Combray is dead to the memory and can only be restored through voluntary memory. Thus, the residue "loses its significance"[60] and the patch of wall is quickly forgotten as it dissolves in the tea-infused madeleine. The said patch of wall reappears in 'The Captive' when Bergotte, the writer, "recalls seeing 'a little patch of yellow wall' (which he can no longer remember) in a Vermeer painting that a critic had praised"[61]. When Bergotte stands before this masterpiece he feels humiliated, bewildered, and painfully aware of the "aridity and pointlessness of art."[62] He says to himself: "My last books are too dry, I ought to have gone over them with a few layers of *colour*, made my language precious in itself, like this little patch of yellow wall."[63] What happens next is that either from an indigestion caused from eating potatoes or the latest effect of the 'little patch of yellow wall' Bergotte collapses and dies.

There is a link between the narrator's 'sort of luminous patch' and the little yellow patch of wall in Vermeer's painting. Both are 'luminous'. That is to say, they are self-lit, glowing, full of and able to reflect and emit light. For both the narrator and Bergotte, there is an attribute or meaning attached to the patch of wall that is unsayable, unrepresentable or forgotten. Equally, for both the narrator and Bergotte, the patch of wall offers the means to redemption: for the narrator in that the patch of wall 'dissolves in the tea-infused madeleine' and thus becomes a part of the involuntary process that brings the past into the present; for Bergotte in that, following his death scene, the narrator ensures

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[58] Cited in Julia Kristeva, Time and Sense: Proust and the Experience of Literature, trans. Ross Guberman, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), p. 4.
[59] See Kristeva, Time and Sense: Proust and the Experience of Literature, p. 4.
[60] Ibid., p. 4.
[61] Cited in Kristeva, Time and Sense: Proust and the Experience of Literature, p. 4.
[62] Ibid., p. 4.
[63] Ibid., p. 4.

Bergotte's posterity, the immortality of his work and of 'true' art in general through the image of the butterfly — a metaphor for the 'little patch of yellow wall' that resonates with such oppositional forces as freedom/imprisonment, the ephemeral and the immortal — a creature (as in Woolf) whose essence is its colour. In the death of Bergotte, instead of the indecisive death of a rather dreary critic, what we get is a disappearance that is re-read through the narrator in a way that gives meaning and coherence to Bergotte's status as character. In her study of Proust, Kristeva asks what it is you are inventing when you create a character. If the answer is "a representation — a fable, a figure a creation — surrounded by a substance"[64] then, she asks, "which substance is it?"[65] In the context of Bergotte the substance that the writer appears to be searching for is *colour*: "My last books are dry, I ought to have gone over them with a few layers of colour, made my language precious in itself"[66].

In Bergotte's final statement, the desire for colour expresses the critic's failure to give to language an aspect that language by itself cannot say. Colour brings meaning or preciousness that is otherwise lacking. Bergotte draws on the painterly technique of using 'layers of colour' to make language precious — words take refuge 'behind' colour. Two crucial points can be drawn out here. One, the way in which colour can be seen to reference the unsayable or unrepresentable. The other, the link that can be made between colour and death. Georges Duthuit (an art critic and close friend of Beckett) says that colour is "hard to explain. Impossible. There must be *something behind colour* which colour alone can convey"[67]. Beckett uses almost identical vocabulary to Duthuit (and Bergotte) in a statement about language: "to bore one hole after another in it, until what lurks behind it — be it something or nothing — begins to seep through; I cannot imagine a higher goal for a writer today"[68]. For the painter, Duthoit comments that there is something '*behind* colour'. Beckett says that for the writer there is something 'lurking behind' language. Each entails a process of hiding or covering

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[64] Kristeva, Time and Sense: Proust and the Experience of Literature, p. 121.
[65] Ibid., p. 121.
[66] Cited in Kristeva, Time and Sense: Proust and the Experience of Literature, p. 4.
[67] Duthuit, The Fauvist Painters, p. 5 (my emphasis).
[68] Samuel Beckett, from a letter to Axel Kaun in 1937, cited in Disjecta: Miscellaneous Writings and a Dramatic Fragment, p. 171.

over[69]. If we look at Vermeer in the context of Duthoit's comment, then we will reveal the artist's well known technique of working with a bright yellow-green background paint to his canvas. In this way, it could be said that the yellow patch or patches in the Vermeer simply fit in with his colour harmony. Yet, the luminous yellow patch, as background, has escaped imprisonment to 'lurk behind' colour and has entered the frame of visibility. Its effect is the possible cause of the death of Bergotte. Thus, it could be said that, in this instance, death lurks behind colour. We could go further and colour it yellow.

In my chapters on Woolf and Richardson, I trace links between the colour yellow and death. As we have seen, Kierkegaard's "poor man shuffling through the streets in a rather worn-out, light yellowish-green"[70] conjures an image of the movement towards death: "the hues that life *once had*"[71]; the appearance throughout Beckett's fiction of the (greenish/yellow) greatcoat is a constant reminder of death. I now want to turn to Beckett's fiction to argue that time, memory and death can be seen to collide in Beckett's fiction through the recurrence of a yellow hue that forges links not only to some of his most important intellectual influences (such as Kierkegaard and Proust) but, further, to the other writers considered in this thesis. As I will go on to show, Beckett's famous 'wombtomb' is a place of — and seen through — the "omnipresence of a [...] yellow light.

In this chapter, I have been mapping not so much a historical linking, but more an interdiscursive resonance between Kierkegaard, Proust and Beckett whereby the theme of colour arouses

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[69] The sense of something 'behind' colour has been considered recently in a correspondence between writer and painter John Berger and film-maker and artist John Christie. In 1997 the remark 'Just send a colour ...' triggers a two-year exchange. Christie paints a patch of yellow and posts it to his colour correspondent. He receives this response: "The yellow you painted is like a name you gave to the light [...] No colour represents light [....] Behind black there's light. And doesn't something equivalent happen always with colour. Isn't the colour always behind what we see? On the far side? [...] even yellow is a covering of the ultimate yellow" [John Berger & John Christie, I Send You This Cadmium Red ... A Correspondence, (Barcelona: Actar, 2000)]. The sense of an 'ultimate yellow' behind yellow is relevant in my reading of Woolf, Richardson and Beckett. This can be linked not only to a philosophical and psychological strain but, also, as we will see in the next chapter, to the 'spiritual'.

[70] Cited in Riley, Colour Codes, p. 17; from Kierkegaard, Either/Or, pp. 22-23.

[71] Cited in Riley, Colour Codes, p. 17; from Kierkegaard, Either/Or, pp. 22-23.

philosophical interest in a way that is entirely oblique, but also strikingly similar in each of their writings. In Kierkegaard, Proust and Beckett, we can see some of the various ways in which the artist is involved in a search: the search for an object. The pain and suffering the subject experiences in its search is made visible through a coloured and visual element that resonates with death. Drawing together Bram and Geer Van Velde, Proust and Kierkegaard, the theme of colour establishes a link: the relation of colour to painting and the *colouring* of memory and thought in relation to inner/outerness. In Beckett, this lends to the writing a hallucinatory quality: a signifier that does not correspond to an object but to the elusive nature of the search — to that which is unrepresentable. (Although, green/yellow can be located in the greatcoat that stalks Beckett's fiction, as I have shown, this is an object that is shrouded in uncertainty through the movement of colour to suggest, or cause, its endlessly repeated cessation and reappearance.) I now want to closely analyse these themes as they can be seen to emerge in 'Yellow' a short story included in More Pricks Than Kicks (1934).

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Yellow

In 'Yellow' the story's protagonist, Belacqua (a character first introduced in Dream of Fair to Middling Women (1932)[72] and who appears throughout Beckett's early works), is in hospital for an

[72] This was Beckett's first novel, written in Paris in 1932. It remained unpublished until after his death.

operation to remove tumours from his neck and foot. The story follows his preparation for surgery and subsequent death due to an oversight with the anaesthetic. Endless polarities permeate the story. Belacqua's neck and foot "top and bottom"[73] are the bodily parts designated for surgery. His suffering "the tortures of the damned" (*Y*, 172)[74] will take place while enjoying innocent and peaceful slumber "as of a little child" (*Y*, 173). The terms of how to experience his predicament is set in the context of the philosophical choice of the ancients and invokes "the extremes of wisdom" (*Y*, 175) of Heraclitus and Democritus: is it to be one for laugher or tears? And yet in a move that extends the notion of contradiction to its end point we are told, "he did not care for these black and white alternatives as a rule [...] between contraries no alternation was possible" (*Y*, 175). Given that Belacqua is a man about to fall asleep for the last time then, based on this comment, death is inconsequential: life and death would have no alternation. Death is a form of sleep and, as such, is an experience that is found in life. At the beginning of the story Belacqua suggests as much: "My sufferings under the anaesthetic, he reflected, will be exquisite, but I shall not remember them" (*Y*, 172). Invoking the future anterior disrupts the time sequence of the story. Are these the words of a man already dead, of a man who has experienced the 'exquisite' pangs of dying yet, alive still, is unable to remember them? The positioning of Belacqua in relation to the (re)telling of his story is analogous to Lacan's formulation of the relation of time/history to truth in psychoanalysis:

> I identify myself in language, but only by losing myself in it like an object. What is realised in my history is not the past definite of what was, since it is no more, or even the present perfect of what has been in what I am, but the future anterior of what I shall have been for what I am in the process of becoming[75]

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[73] Samuel Beckett, 'Yellow' in More Pricks Than Kicks, (London: John Calder, 1973; first publ. London: Chatto & Windus, 1934), p. 180; (hereafter cited *Y*).

[74] In Canto 4 of Dante's Inferno the Pilgrim descends into the darkness of the Second Circle of Hell, where he will witness the sufferings of the damned. There are numerous critical studies that map the importance of Dante in Beckett's writings. For instance, see Keir Elam, 'Dead heads: damnation-narration in the 'dramaticules' in The Cambridge Companion to Beckett; Hélène L. Baldwin, Samuel Beckett's Real Silence, Wallace Fowlie, 'Dante and Beckett' in Stuart Y. McDougal, (ed.), Dante Among the Moderns, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985); Neal Oxenhandler, 'Seeing and believing in Dante and Beckett', in Marry Ann Caws, (ed.), Writing in a Modern Temper: Essays on French Literature and Thought in Honor of Henri Peyre, (California: Anima Libri, 1984).

[75] Jacques Lacan, '*The function and field of speech and language in psychoanalysis*' in Ecrits: A Selection, trans. Alan Sheridan, (London: Tavistock/Routledge, 1992; first publ. 1966), p. 86.

As in a psychoanalytic exchange, Belacqua's life story appears to evoke a past for the interests of the present. This evocation does not have as its aim the identification of immutable truths. Rather, the past is illuminating for the future. Both Lacan's description and Belacqua's (re)telling is seen to rest on a loss, or an unconscious act of hiding, made more problematic in that Belacqua sits uncomfortably with the structural topography of the psyche that includes an unconscious. Accordingly, it is possible to read Belacqua's statement another way, as a conscious will to stifle (un)conscious experience: "My sufferings [...] I shall not remember them" (*Y*, 172). Throughout the story, conscious and unconscious spheres battle for dominance of Belacqua's mind and body. Inner and outer conflict and make uncertain where one ends and the other begins. For instance, Belacqua has a "*yellow* face" (*Y*, 185) that he describes as his "put a good face on it" (*Y*, 173). This *yellow* is a mask, or patina. It makes visible the face that Belacqua wishes others to see; a face absent of pain. Thus, the reader is introduced to two 'faces'. The 'real' face is rendered (in)visible by the mask and is but a reflection of what Belacqua desires people to see. The nursing staff "searched his yellow face for signs of discomposure" (*Y*, 185) but see only this mask. Yellow is the colour through which Belacqua assumes mastery over the self rendered visible to others.

Analysis of what is (in)visible moves also within the topography of the psyche. At the beginning of the story we are told how Belacqua's mind is master of the tortures that he will suffer. Yet, contradictory to this, Belacqua prepares a comfortable place before "being kicked into his mind by the world" (*Y*, 175). In other words, the mind has two points of entry: one conscious, the other unconscious in the sense that he sees things external to his mind as able to draw him into contact with it against his will. The unconscious is visited via something Belacqua fears is outside of himself, beyond control. Belacqua struggles to prepare for the event of unconscious entry. Yet the one thing he cannot master is the moment of waking, the event of morning that initiates his entry into the conscious world. Try as hard as he might Belacqua cannot master the "nasty birth" (*Y*, 172) of daybreak. Daybreak is his real fear. The repetitive compulsion of morning Belacqua calls the

"superfluous delivery" (*Y*, 180), a "dribble of time" (*Y*, 180) reflected in the "yaller" (*Y*, 180) of the sun on the wall. The sun brings an altogether "higher tone" (*Y*, 180), a heightening of the "grand old" (*Y*, 180) yaller — a yellow faded by the processes of time — to its former vividness. Yellow sustains the compulsion to repeat, a dribble of time, the nasty birth of 'superfluous' delivery. The obsolete birth takes place in a suspension or endlessly repeated flow of time that conjures an image of Beckett's 'wombtomb' — birth and death set on a monochromatic scale of yellow.

The compulsion to repeat is contextually linked with "nasty birth [...] superfluous delivery" (*Y*, 172) in a way that brings to mind Freud's thesis concerning a 'death drive': the goal is to bring the living being back to the inorganic state, to the moment prior to the 'superfluous' event of birth. Freud writes of the death instincts as instincts "*par excellence*, in that they typify the repetitive nature of instinct in general"[76], an irrepressible force of psychical conflict that, Freud acknowledged, was never 'visible': "the death instinct 'eludes our perception [...] unless it is tinged with erotism'"[77]. This erotism Freud describes in relation to sadistic or masochistic tendencies. Directed towards objects in the external world the instinct is called the destructive instinct, the instinct for mastery or the will to power that, in attendance of sexuality, constitutes sadism. Freud asserts nevertheless that "Another portion does not share in this transposition outwards: it remains inside the organism and [...] becomes libidinally bound there"[78]. In this portion is recognised erotogenic masochism. As we have seen, the repetitive strain of the 'superfluous delivery' of which Belacqua speaks in 'Yellow' shifts between a sense of inner and outerness. If the yellow mask is an outward sign to hide inner conflict, then in the effect of the sun on the wall can we see, again, an inner conflict hidden in an outward effect? Belacqua's own analysis leads towards the nasty birth of daybreak. Yet, this act of hiding, it can be argued, holds traces of the sado-masochistic tendencies that Freud identifies in the death drive and its links with sexuality. I now want to draw out the ways in which I see this taking place.

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[76] Laplanche and Pontalis: The Language of Psychoanalysis, p. 98.
[77] Ibid., p. 99.
[78] Freud, 'The Economic Problem of Masochism', cited in Julia Kristeva, Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia, trans. Leon S. Roudiez, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), p. 16.

Upon the 'superfluous delivery' we are told that Belacqua "would draw the blinds, both blinds" (*Y*, 180). His inner self blocks out the external world and vice versa — the outside has no way of infiltrating within. The mask speaks "What a lovely morning" (*Y*, 180) as a gesture to acknowledge the external world. But this is purely a device to disguise an inward 'shutting out' of its intrusive demand, of the superfluous birth of morning. Belacqua "tried hard to cure himself, to frighten or laugh himself out of this weakness, but to no avail. He would grow tired and say to himself: *I am what I am*" (*Y*, 172). If we refer back to Van Velde, it would seem that Belacqua, stuck with the predicament of *I am what I am*, cannot see the object (his indebtedness to Van Velde is hinted: "He had read the phrase somewhere and liked it and made it his own" (*Y*, 172)). The effect of daybreak made visible in the *yaller* of the wall is confronted by an 'inner chronology' coloured with the spectrum of blackness. In the transition from yellow to *yaller* something has been lost. We are back at the impasse Beckett recognises in the Van Velde brothers: "one[...] I cannot see the object to represent it because the object is what it is. The other, I cannot see the object to represent it because I am what I am"[79]. The blind spot between these two opposing mists can be seen as a variable point on a monochromatic colour scale from yellow to yaller. Yet, is the blind spot really visible to Belacqua as he suggests? Recall, in Proust's story, the patch of yellow wall and its effect upon Bergotte is linked to the critic's death. A 'luminous yellow patch' generates a similar fear in Belacqua. The *yaller* of the sun on the wall is his 'real fear'. However, while Bergotte's fear is conjured in front of a painting by Vermeer, for Belacqua there is no painting or art object. Instead, fear comes from the anxiety triggered by a moment between "superfluous [...] nasty birth" (*Y*, 172) and "execution" (*Y*, 172) or death. The 'object' (as witnessed by Proust's Bergotte) is missing. In its place is anxiety made visible through as a hallucinatory hue and which can be seen to reference the span of time between birth and death: "his anxiety [is] to give colour to this pause" (*Y*, 178).

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[79] Beckett, *The New Object*, in Bram Van Velde, p. 167.

Yellow predominates throughout this story. The yellow of the title finds insistence in explicit reference within the story to "his yellow face [...] a mask" (*Y*, 185). Yet, other references are made to the colour yellow that are more enigmatic. Yellow is disguised as *yaller* in reference to the 'superfluous birth' and disguised as "picric" (*Y*, 181) — a toxic sparingly soluble crystalline *yellow* acid (used as a dye, antiseptic and explosive) — in reference to the painting of Belacqua's genitals (his "little bump of amativeness" (*Y*, 181)) in preparation for surgery. In both these contexts, yellow has an implicit sexual orientation. Again, a link is made explicit between the colouring of sexuality and the "nasty birth" (*Y*, 172) of superfluous delivery. A string of connections can be made in the movement from yellow to yaller that implicates Beckett's use of colour as something more than visual description. Numerous connecting paths — sexuality, time, the 'masking' of pain, the repetitive strain between birth and death — lead back to yellow/yaller and open up the potential for deeper meaning. What is 'this coloured plane' to which the title points?

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Writing anxiety

As is well known among Beckett's readers and critics, Beckett insists that he was born on Friday 13 April 1906 yet his birth certificate gives the date as 13 May 1906. His birth was officially registered on 14 June 1906. Such discrepancy bears the question of when Beckett left his mother's womb. Deirdre Bair's biography of Beckett begins: "No matter how confused the events of a life, birth is usually without ambiguity – one enters the world at a certain time on a specific date"[80]. Yet, Beckett

[80] Deirdre Bair, Samuel Beckett, (London & New York: Vintage, 1978), p1.

enters the world one month before he was officially recorded as having been born. For one month, Beckett could be said to be born and yet not born. Beckett's birth on 13 April, if indeed this is the true date, coincides with Good Friday of that year and is assimilated by Beckett into a view of life which sees birth as intimately connected with suffering and death (a theme that many critics analyse in his writing). This view is not restricted to Beckett's fiction. For example, recalling his psychoanalysis with Wilfred Bion, Beckett says:

> I used to lie down on the couch and try to go back in my past. I think it probably did help. I think it helped me perhaps to control the panic. I certainly came up with some extraordinary memories of being in the womb. Intrauterine memories. I remember feeling trapped, of being imprisoned and unable to escape, of crying to be let out but no one could hear, no one was listening. I remember being in pain but being unable to do anything about it[81]

During a conversation with the artist and writer Charles Juliet in 1968 Beckett, again:

> I have always had the feeling that somebody inside me had been murdered. Murdered before I was born. I had to find that person and try to bring him back to life… I once went to a lecture given by Jung… He talked about one of his patients, a little girl… At the end, when the audience were filing out, Jung stood there in silence. And then he added, as if to himself, in amazement at a sudden discovery: 'In fact, she had never really been born.'
> I have always had the feeling that I had never been born either[82]

In the first quote cited Beckett is trapped within the womb. In the second, entrapment is within himself, a feeling that leads back to that of having never been born and which is entrapment under another guise, still back to the womb. In the first citation, Beckett fills an empty space; in the second, it is an empty space inside himself that has been filled by death. Both contexts are traceable in 'Yellow'. In the first case, the superfluous birth of which Belacqua speaks conjures a fear of having

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[81] James Knowlson, Damned To Fame: The Life of Samuel Beckett, (London: Bloomsbury, 1996) p. 177.
[82] Juliet, Conversations with Samuel Beckett and Bram Van Velde, p. 138. (These words are not in the original French in which Beckett conducted the conversation, translation by Janey Tucker.) In her biography of Beckett, Deirdre Bair discusses at length the profound influence of Jung's lecture on the young Beckett, a lecture which he attended in 1935.

never been born. In the second, to restate Belacqua's words from the opening pages of 'Yellow': "My sufferings under the anaesthetic, *he reflected*, will be exquisite, but *I shall not* remember them" (*Y*, 172). Here, the "murdered"[83] 'man' is not dead but sleeping. Belacqua's reflection suggests his death as having already taken place. Restating Beckett on his own sensation, we might say that this possibility is the only state from which the trigger to bring him "back to life"[84] has any meaning. What this bringing back sets in motion is the act of dying, repeatedly. The subject (Belacqua) and the object of which he speaks — his own murdered self — are brought into the picture simultaneously through the yellow mask and the 'superfluous birth' reflected on the yaller wall.

Yellow refers to an object included in the signifying texture, to Belacqua's mask. However, at the same time the yellow of the title creates a void, a hole in the mask's texture. To look at the occasion of yellow in the story as positive correspondence with the title is, at best, a mistake. It is my contention that the title makes an incision into the story that is a substitute of some representation: the murdered man is missing. The 'mask' renders (in)visible the murdered man and makes of him a hallucinatory object — an object that returns not as the repressed returns (in discourse) but in hallucination, in the *real*. This takes further — hallucinates — the death/life relations that I examined in Woolf. Whereas in Woolf I identify a borderline zone between life and death, in Beckett, the title takes the place of this void — of a missing, originally repressed representation. Yellow is a hole in the discourse from where the subject starts to speak of itself, of its murdered element: "this hole represents the point at which the juncture between Real, Symbolic and Imaginary dimensions is flawed, and where, consequently, an element that was not symbolised will return in the real"[85]. In discourse, the murdered man can be thought to reside in the place that Beckett constantly refers to as the womb-tomb, the abode of the non-dead. Further links can be traced between this place and the colour yellow.

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[83] Juliet, Conversations with Samuel Beckett and Bram Van Velde, p. 138.
[84] Ibid., p. 138.
[85] Martin Thom, 'A Problem in the Interpretation of Freud' in Yale French Studies: The Unconscious: A Psychoanalytic Study, (eds.) Jean Laplanche & Serge Leclair, (Yale French Studies, 48: 118-76), p. 174.

The 'womb'-like place in Belacqua-speech shifts between the inconsistencies of the heart and mind.

For instance, in Dream of Fair to Middling Women he claims to move:

> with the ***shades*** of the dead and the dead-born and the unborn and the never-to-be-born, in a Limbo purged of desire [...] If that is what is meant by going back into one's heart could anything be better, in this world or the next? The mind, dim and hushed like a sick-room [...] there is nothing of him left but the umbra of grave and womb where it is fitting that the spirits of his dead and his unborn should come abroad [...] it was fake thought and false living, stayed outside the tunnel. But in the umbra, the tunnel, when the mind went wombtomb, then it was real thought and real living, living thought[86] (my emphasis)

It is interesting here that Beckett writes of the dead, dead-born, unborn and never-to-be-born as 'shades'. Throughout his later work light, dark and semi-dark play an important role. Given that colour is the coming together of light and dark then the stages from dead to never-to-be-born can be thought as varying points on a colour scale. As we have already seen in 'Yellow', the stages from dead to never-to-be-born are witnessed in Beckett on a colour scale that is monochromatic: yellow to *yaller*.[87] To restate Kierkegaard's depiction of his life as a monochrome painting: he says that that the result of his life is like the painting of the artist who was to paint a picture of the Israelites crossing the Red Sea and "To this end, he painted the whole wall red, explaining that the Israelites had already crossed over, and that the Egyptians were drowned"[88]. The image here is one of already having 'crossed over to the other side', of living in the land of the dead — an abode that cannot be represented other than as "simply nothing, a mood, a single colour"[89]. There are unmistakable similarities here with Beckett's intrauterine memories, an abode where the

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[86] Samuel Beckett, Dream of Fair to Middling Women, (London, Paris: Calder Publications, 1996), pp. 44-45.
[87] In Beckett's later work black, white and grey predominate. There is much consternation among colour theorists (back to the Classical Age) as to whether or not black and white are colours of the spectrum or just the 'end points' of dark and light that colour comes out of.
[88] Kierkegaard, Either/Or, Vol 1, p. 28.
[89] Ibid., p. 28.

"murdered"[90], the "imprisoned"[91] and the "never-been-born"[92] — the shades of the dead and the dead-born and the unborn and the never-to-be-born"[93] — occupy the gap between stabilising existence and dispossession. This floating sense of 'non-existence' is articulated and made visible through colour: Kierkegaard's 'red', Beckett's yellow.

In a later piece of short prose entitled The Lost Ones (1966, 1968) the colour yellow is, again, brought into play. In this story, yellow is unguardedly staged as the colour that 'situates' the themes we have been discussing in terms of both vision and of sensation. The story depicts a cylindrical sphere that is full of bodies, cavities, niches, *tunnels*: a place that has the "omnipresence of a dim yellow light"[94]. Three zones are referred to throughout the piece – light, half-light and dark[95] – that are on the monochromatic scale of yellow: the cylinder is "*agleam*"[96] with the "omnipresence"[97] of yellowness, of a *dim* yellow light. Agleam to dim takes the coloured scale from light to dark. The cylinder is peopled with bodies striving in vain to copulate, to find a way out. There are multifarious images of tunnels as eyes: man tries to see his way to get out; the vagina as tunnel or series of connecting tunnels leading to the womb attempts a way out through birth; the image of a graveyard, of bodies lying one on top of another in a maze-like underworld of potential tunnels that conjures fear of being buried alive tries for a way out through death. Yet to be possessed by the will to get out is to be "darkward bound"[98]; the dim yellow light, we are told, will be "the last to leave them"[99]. If the seeds of Beckett's statements about intrauterine memories can be traced in this story — "what first impresses in this gloom is the sensation of yellow it imparts [...] how it throbs with constant

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[90] Juliet, Conversations with Samuel Beckett and Bram Van Velde, p. 138.
[91] Knowlson, Damned To Fame: The Life of Samuel Beckett, p. 177.
[92] Juliet, Conversations with Samuel Beckett and Bram Van Velde, p. 138.
[93] Beckett, Dream of Fair to Middling Women, p. 44.
[94] Beckett, 'The Lost Ones' in The Complete Short Prose: 1929-1989, p. 202, p. 205.
[95] Again, a link can be made between Beckett and Dante: Dante's Divine Comedy recounts three zones of post-death destination.
[96] Beckett, 'The Lost Ones' in The Complete Short Prose: 1929-1989, p. 202.
[97] Ibid., p. 202.
[98] Ibid., p. 207.
[99] Ibid., p. 207.

unchanging beat"[100] — then what remains of the memory – "the last to leave [him]"[101] – is yellowness, the omnipresence of a dim yellow light. The 'wombtomb' is a place of 'yellowness'. Birth and death is made visible through an omnipresent yellow.

Much psychoanalytic work has been concerned with the nature of internal space in its positive and negative realisations. For instance, the work of Nicholas Abraham and Maria Torok constructs the analysis of a crypt, an enclave inside the self that is "a kind of pocket of resistance, the hard cyst of an 'artificial unconscious'"[102] where the self identifies with the lost object. D. W. Winnicott develops a notion of a 'potential space' as: "the hypothetical area that exists (but cannot exist) between the baby and the object (mother or part of mother) during the phase of the repudiation of the object as not me, that is at the end of being merged in with the object"[103]. Melanie Klein's formulations depend upon a visual image of a space containing various 'objects' that are projections of parts of the personality that have been split off. For instance, the hostile space in 'Infantile Anxiety-Situations Reflected in a Work of Art and in the Creative Impulse'[104] cites a psychoanalytic encounter where the analysand has a hostile, empty space inside her, a space she could only overcome through the symbolic recreation of her mother in painting. The analysand redeems herself by moving from the blank space to the reconstitution of the mother through art. In Attention and Interpretation, Wilfred Bion sets out his theory of the famous 'point O' and its transformations, arguing that the geometer's concept of space derives from an experience of "the place where something was [...] a feeling of depression [is] the place where a breast or other lost object was"[105] or that 'space' is "where depression, or some other emotion, used to be"[106]. Art critic Peter Fuller considers various

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[100] Ibid., p. 213.
[101] Ibid., p. 207.
[102] Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, The Wolf Man's Magic Word, trans. Nicholas Rand, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), p. xix.
[103] D.W. Winnicott, Playing and Reality, (London: Penguin Books, 1974), p. 177.
[104] Taken from The Selected Melanie Klein, (ed.) Juliet Mitchell, (London: Penguin, 1986).
[105] Wilfred Bion, Attention and Interpretation, (London: Tavistock, 1970), p. 8.
[106] Ibid., p. 8.

psychoanalytic models and comes up with a theory that from the moment a foetus develops eyes in its mother's womb it begins to sense an aura of colour around it[107]. An unbreakable bond is established between pleasant feelings of security and vague expanses of colour. A melancholic yearning for this lost security becomes visible and experiential as an expanse of colour.

In Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia Julia Kristeva analyses depressive states in the melancholic as emerging from the perception of a dilemma at the root of selfhood. The immensity of the search for self renders the subject powerless and yet it is the 'love' of a lost identity or attachment that lies at the very core of the 'black sun', depression's dark centre. In his doubtful moments the depressed person is a philosopher and, Kristeva suggests, Kierkegaard is one such philosopher to whom we are indebted to meaningful reflection on melancholia:

> The artist consumed by melancholia is at the same time the most relentless in his struggle against the symbolic abdication that blankets him ... Until death strikes or suicide becomes imperative for those who view it as final triumph over the void of the lost object[108]

Beckett's struggle is indeed relentless. Yet death appears to offer no way out. He writes:

> We are not merely more weary because of yesterday, we are other, no longer what we were before the calamity of yesterday [...] The good or evil disposition of the object has neither reality nor significance [...] The aspirations of yesterday were valid for yesterday's ego, not for today's. We are disappointed at the nullity of what we are pleased to call attainment. But what is attainment? The identification of the subject with the object of his desire. The subject has died — and perhaps many times — on the way (*PD*, 13-14)

If the object is found then the subject is lost, ad infinitum. Here, Beckett is referring to Proust's sense of the past as lost, found and lost again. In Proust, according to Beckett, habit as part of the "boredom of living" (*PD*, 19) can be replaced by "the suffering of being" (*PD*, 19). Proust's

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[107] See Waldemar Januszczak, 'Somewhere Inside the Rainbow' in *Sunday Times, Culture*, 14 February 1999, p. 2.
[108] Julia Kristeva, Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia, translated by Leon S Roudiez, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), p. 9.

voluntary and involuntary memory is the starting point for this process. Involuntary memory recaptures elements of habit and transforms it into a lived experience. Suffering comes into play through its realisation that what is being experienced has already been lost — and will be so again. Thus habit may not be dead "but sleeping" (*PD*, 21). The chance occurrence of involuntary memory to recall this lost experience — the death of Habit and the brief suspension of its vigilance — is necessary in order for the subject to feel pain. This is Habit's "alchemy" (*PD*, 25). It transforms the individual capable of suffering into a stranger, one who suffers. Sound, smell, taste and the "agony of colour" (*PD*, 24) are the sensations that trigger such alchemical reactions in the subject. To return to 'Yellow', Belacqua's invocation statement: "My sufferings under, the anaesthetic, he reflected, will be exquisite, but I shall not remember them" (*Y*, 172) is the realisation that what is or will be experienced has already been lost and will be so again. Yet, on this occasion, the chance suspension of vigilance to recall lost experience is to be avoided. Belacqua prepares for the death of habit and suspension of its vigilance in a way that disrupts the Proustian experiencing of pain. His intricate preparation for the experience that he 'shall not remember' disavows lost experience in advance. Nevertheless, the "agony of colour" (*PD*, 24) of which Beckett speaks enacts a further disavowal in which involuntary memory can be seen to be at work. The title of the story — yellow — both forms — and is formed out of — this disavowal: as a process of movement from birth to death: "his anxiety to give colour to this pause" (*Y*, 178).

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Another real

The absence of relation between inner/outer, subject/object, as we have seen, triggers anxiety in Beckett's writing yet finds expression in a coloured and hallucinatory quality through which the theme of death is made visible. I now want to look at anxiety through a different psychoanalytic model. A narcissistic element (again explored as yellow and 'hallucinatory') can also be explored via an anxiety that emerges from the impossibility of relation between subject/object and inner/outer and develops the psychoanalytic reading I have done so far into a more strictly philosophical domain.

Beckett writes the poem *Alba*, included in Echo's Bones (1935) for Ethna MacCarthy (Beckett's first love). It begins "before morning you shall be here"[109] (thus restating Belacqua's sun-on-the-wall fears in 'Yellow'):

> before morning you shall be here
> [...] who though you stoop with fingers of compassion
> to endorse the dust
> shall not add to your bounty
> *whose beauty shall be a sheet before me*
> *a statement of itself* drawn across the tempest of emblems
> so that there is no sun and no unveiling
> and no host
> *only I and then the sheet*
> and bulk dead[110] (*my emphasis*)

While a yellow hue is not clearly apparent in this poem, points of reference can be made that reach back to the story of Echo and Narcissus (Echo being Narcissus' lost love; narcissus a yellow flower). The story of Narcissus is from Ovid's 'Metamorphoses' (the mythical tale which, of course, lends itself to Freud's theory of narcissism) and recounts the tale of Narcissus' 'lost love', Echo. As is well

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[109] Samuel Beckett, *Alba* in Collected Poems in English and French, (New York: Grove Press, 1977), p. 15.
[110] Ibid., p. 15.

known, a wood nymph named Echo sees and falls in love with a beautiful Greek youth, Narcissus. Narcissus rebuffs Echo's adoration and instead, fixing his gaze on his own image in a pool, unwittingly falls in love with the reflection of himself. Not recognising the image as his own Narcissus tries to embrace its perfect beauty. Beckett's lines read: "Whose beauty [...] of itself ...] only I"[111] The only love he seeks is this cruel, 'untouchable' love that cannot be reached without its vanishing. Once Narcissus realises that the image is indeed his own, it is too late. He pines away becoming the 'yellow' flower that bears his name:

> Where the first ray of the morning sun
> Creeps across it,
> He melted – consumed
> By his love[112]

This stanza has links to both 'Yellow' and *Alba*: the 'morning sun' and its announcement of Belacqua's impending death in 'Yellow'; the first and last lines of *Alba* ("before morning you shall be here [...] only I [...] and bulk dead"[113]). In Ovid's poem, Narcissus's madness is disclosed when he recognises his other as his self[114]. I want to trace these links — yellow, the morning sun, self/other, narcissistic love and the threat of madness — through a brief reading of Murphy (1938), Beckett's subsequent novel to More Pricks Than Kicks, and the ways in which it highlights the earlier text under analysis.

Murphy opens with its protagonist naked and tied to a rocking chair. The chair is a place of exile where Murphy goes to seek solace from the duality of mind and body and the anxiety that this unequivocal state produces in him. Leaving his native Dublin for London, Murphy is followed to

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[111] Ibid., p. 15.
[112] *Echo and Narcissus*, in Tales from Ovid, trans. Ted Hughes, (London: Faber and Faber, 1997), p. 83.
[113] Beckett, *Alba* in Collected Poems in English and French, p. 15.
[114] It is worth noting that Kierkegaard, also, draws on 'Echo' in this context. In 'Diapsalmata' in Either/Or he writes: "I have only one friend, Echo. And why is Echo my friend? Because I love my sorrow, and Echo does not take it away from me. I have only one confidant, the silence of the night. And why is it my confidant? Because it is silent", Kierkegaard, Either/Or, p51.

England by an entourage of Irish men and women who, at the bequest of a Miss Counihan, Murphy's supposed fiancée, set out to locate the said hero. In the meantime, Murphy falls in love with a prostitute named Celia. Reminiscent of Kierkegaard's roaming figure with her green eyes and yellow hair, Celia is described by Murphy thus:

Age	Unimportant
Head	Small and round
Eyes	Green
Complexion	White
Hair	Yellow
Features	Mobile (*M*, 10)

To keep Celia from working the streets Murphy takes to the streets himself, finally landing a job at the Magdalen Mercy Seat, a psychiatric hospital. It is here that, for the first time since his arrival in London, Murphy feels at home. He is among "the race of people he had long since despaired of finding" (*M*, 97). This 'home' is where he meets his end.

The emphasis placed on colour in this novel is significant. Again, yellow is particular. At the beginning of the story, Murphy comes into possession of a "large black envelope" (*M*, 21) with a title written "in letters of various colours" (*M*, 21). It contains his horoscope chart, collated by an Eastern mystic. Murphy learns that his lucky colour is lemon and, throughout the novel, wears a lemon bow tie or dickey. He is advised to beware of pains in the neck and feet (recall his literary predecessor, Belacqua, dies in *yellow* while having operations to the neck and feet) and, we are told, is in constant danger of losing "his yellow" (*M*, 26; 94). On possession of the envelope, Celia witnesses that: "All the colour (yellow) had ebbed from his face" (*M*, 21). After probing its contents his yellow is "all revived" (*M*, 23). The gesture of colour does not escape Celia:

> 'Why the black envelope,' she said, 'and the different-coloured letters?'
>
> 'Because Mercury,' said Murphy, 'god of thieves, planet *par excellence* and mine, has no fixed colour.' (*M*, 22)

Mercury is the smallest planet and is nearest to the sun. In Roman mythology Mercury is the messenger of the Gods. The Greek counterpart is Hermes, divinity of commerce, cunning, theft and travellers, etymologically taken from hermeticus the inventor of a magic seal, alchemy. The content page of the envelope is headed '*THEMA COELI*'. The etymology of Coel is as a prefix, used to indicate a cavity within a body of a hollow organ or part. Thus the title can be read: 'Theme: a cavity of the hollow-I'. This is reminiscent not only of the empty place of the father's long green greatcoat mentioned at the beginning of this chapter but brings to bear on the possible disguises, hollows, missing persons that I have sought to unravel from the title and content of the earlier story, 'Yellow'. The hollow-I, also, has all the philosophical resonance with which I began — the uncertainty and unrepresentability of relations between subject/object, inner/outer. In Murphy's story there is something externally visible about him that Celia refers to as his "yellow" (*M*, 21), something that Murphy is afraid to lose and that appears to be visible only to himself and Celia. When Celia suggests he walk the streets looking for work Murphy "lost all his yellow again" (*M*, 26); when he takes up a job at the Magdalen Mercy Seat psychiatric hospital he "broke into sweat, *lost all his yellow*" (*M*, 94). Murphy and Celia share a room with walls "distempered a vivid lemon, Murphy's lucky colour" (*M*, 40). Yet "the lemon of the walls whined like Vermeer's" (*M*, 127) and "is so far in excess of the squeeze prescribed" (*M*, 40) that Murphy is "uneasy in his mind" (*M*, 40). As Celia's green eyes and yellow hair conjure a (perhaps naked) image of Kierkegaard's figure, so Murphy is clothed in a green suit and lemon dickey bow. Yet the suit, he says, is "not green, but aeruginous" (*M*, 45). To be aeruginous is to not let anything in *or* out. Like the Greek *Mercury* or Hermes, and the God's relation to the magic seal of alchemy, so Murphy's outfit is "entirely non-porous. It admitted no air from the outer world, it allowed none of Murphy's own vapours to escape" (*M*, 45). It constitutes a magic seal.

The magic seal that Murphy's suit offers in the external world, he seeks to secure for his mind while moving in the rocking chair famously introduced at the beginning of the story. It is in the rocking chair, the place where Murphy claims "light and dark did not clash" (*M*, 9) that Murphy tries to control the coloured spheres of inner and outer (as polarised earlier in relation to the brothers Van

Velde). Throughout the story, fixed boundaries are constantly sought between mind and body, self and other. It is through the colour yellow that the boundary of discrete selfhood between Celia and Murphy is brought into question. For instance, when Murphy forces Celia to look at him: "The clear green of her eyes, rolling now and averted like an aborting goat's, was silted with yellow [...] She looked through him [...] back off him" (*M*, 80) as if seeing her reflection. Just as for Belacqua, it is Murphy's yellow that makes him visible to others. Yet, contrary to his predecessor, Murphy is not master of his external visible qualities. Murphy's *visible* yellow fluctuates with his emotional state and appears visible to Celia without his will, just in the same way that Celia — or, more broadly, the feminine — is visible to him as an absent presence:

> In the days when Murphy was concerned with seeing Miss Counihan, he had had to close his eyes to do so. And even now when he closed them there was no guarantee that Miss Counihan would not appear. That was *Murphy's really yellow spot.* Similarly he had seen Celia for the first time, not when she revolved before him ... but while she was away consulting the Reach. It was as though some instinct had withheld her from accosting him in form until he should have obtained a clear view of her advantages, and warned her that before he could see it had to be not merely dark, but his own dark. Murphy believed there was no dark quite like his own dark
> (*M*, 54, *my emphasis*)

Celia emerges from Murphy's inner dark as a spot of light, a *yellow spot.* Her existence within his inner 'dark' appears to be more certain than her appearance in the external world. The same is suggested of Miss Counihan[115]. Murphy's "own dark" (*M*, 54) is the dark that is mustered during the sado-masochistic exercise he undertakes tied naked to the rocking chair. It is only when reaching the climactic point of the rock that he feels "astir in his mind, in the freedom of that light and dark did not clash, nor alternate, nor fade nor lighten except to their communion" (*M*, 9). Emerging from the chair Murphy:

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[115] Writing on Beckett's early fiction, James Acheson claims that Murphy's yellow spot is his refusal to accept that there can be anything but freedom in the mind. Yet, Acheson does not discuss colour philosophically but retreats to a scientific account of perception through which to dismiss colour's relevance: "This may be a variation on the idea that all is yellow to the jaundiced eye, though I am grateful to my colleague at Otago University, Chris Ackerley, for the suggestion that it refers to the yellowish part of the retina, where vision is most acute" [James Acheson, Samuel Beckett's Artistic Theory & Practice: Criticism, Drama & Early Fiction, (London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1997), p. 53.]

bared his eyes to the moon, he forced back the lids with his fingers, the yellow oozed under them into his skull, a belch came wet and foul from the green old days –

Gazed on unto my setting from my rise
Almost of none but of unquiet eyes – (*M*, 62)

The 'green' of some former time makes its presence felt. Yellow oozes behind the eyelids, into his skull, into his mind, trying to get in and trying to get out. The internal seeks reconciliation with the external. Yet, the occurrence of green interrupts. Green is the colour that returns. The stakes of these two colours have been focused throughout this chapter – the green of Kristeva's hallucinatory signifier, Kierkegaard's yellowish-green, the yellow in Proust and Vermeer, innumerable references throughout Beckett's writing. Yet, recalling Belacqua's statement that "between contraries no alternation was possible" (*Y*, 175) so, again, the ancient philosophy of Democritus states that yellow and green are two species of the same genus of hue.[116] According to Democritus yellow is not an independent hue but is a light species of green. On this model it would follow that yellow is, in fact, missing. Yellow does not signify. Yellow is a light species of green.

Beckett attended a lecture by Carl Gustav Jung at the Tavistock Clinic in 1935. At this lecture, Jung is discussing the personal and the collective unconscious. He draws a diagram which portrays the different spheres of the mind in gradually darkening colours, in circles of decreasing circumference, until the personal and collective unconscious is reached, shown as a black circle at the very heart of the drawing. To this end, Jung says that when the patient sinks into the unconscious he is completely victimised by it: "he is the victim of a new autonomous activity that does not start from his ego but starts from the dark sphere"[117]. At the time he attended this lecture, Beckett was working on

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[116] This is recorded by John Gage in his study of colour back to antiquity. See Colour and Culture, pp. 11-13. Democritus' theory is the earliest recorded proposal that yellow and green are two species of the same genus of hue. His theory was taken up and developed by Plato and Aristotle in the 4th century and, through them, became the starting point of all subsequent colour systems until Newton.
[117] Bair, Samuel Beckett,, pp. 220-221.

Murphy. His biographer, Deirdre Bair, says it was this lecture that provided the catalyst Beckett was looking for to "move Murphy out of West Brompton and into his (Murphy's) mind"[118]: "Murphy's mind pictured itself as a large hollow sphere, hermetically closed to the universe without. This was not an impoverishment, for it excluded nothing that it did not itself contain" (*M*, 63). It is at this point of the story we are told that a shocking thing has happened: the point of this story, *'Murphy's mind'* has been reached:

> He was split, one part of him never left this mental chamber that pictured itself as a sphere full of light fading into dark, because there was no way out. But motion in this world depended on rest in the world outside... There were the three zones, light, half light, dark, each with its speciality. In the first [...] the elements of physical experience [...]. In the second [...] the pleasure was contemplation [...] the Belacqua bliss and others scarcely less precise [...]. The third, the dark [...]. Here he was not free, but a mote in the dark of absolute freedom. He did not move, he was a point in the ceaseless unconditioned generation and passing away of line
>
> (*M*, 65-55)

Murphy's external yellow is intimately bound up with some inner, unknown sphere of perception.

The dark sphere of Jung's collective unconscious and Kristeva's 'Black Sun' (the depressive's dark centre) can be read alongside Murphy and establish a particular way of seeing which he feels is unique to him:

> Wylie came a little closer to Murphy, but his way of looking was as different from Murphy's as a *voyeur's* from a *voyant's*, though Wylie was no more the one in the indecent sense than Murphy was the other in the supradescent sense. The terms are only taken to distinguish between the vision that depends on light, object, viewpoint, etc, and the vision that all those things embarrass (*M*, 54)

This citation recapitulates the search for an object that Beckett identifies in the Van Velde brothers: one cannot see the object because "the object is what it is"[119]; the other cannot see the object because "I am what I am"[120]. The unity that Beckett establishes between the two brother-artists is, in

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[118] Ibid., p. 221.
[119] Beckett, *The New Object*, in Bram Van Velde, p. 167.
[120] Ibid., p. 167.

Murphy, located in a schizophrenic patient. Mr Endon shows to Murphy a particular way of seeing that fuses these two positions. Kneeling in front of Endon, Murphy sees himself "stigmatized in [...] eyes that do not see him" (*M*, 140). The part that he plays throughout the story — himself in the position of the one who sees and is not seen — is reversed:

> 'The last at last seen of him
> himelf unseen by him
> and of himself'
> [...] The last Mr Murphy saw of Mr Endon was Mr Murphy unseen by Mr Endon. This was also the last Murphy saw of Murphy [...] Mr Murphy is a speck in Mr Endon's unseen (*M*, 140)

At this point, where Murphy becomes a speck unseen, he hastens a retreat and turns his vision inwards, to the pictures of his mind. His failure to formulate any kind of picture – either internal or external – brings on his exit to the garret and subsequent death:

> When he was naked he lay down in a tuft of soaking tuffets and tried to get a picture of Celia. In vain. Of his mother. In vain. Of his father (for he was not illegitimate). In vain. It was usual for him to fail with his mother; and usual, though less usual, for him to fail with a woman. But never before had he failed with his father. He saw the clenched fists and rigid upturned face of the Child in a Giovanni Bellini Circumcision, waiting to feel the knife [...] He tried again with his father [...] In vain in all cases. He could not get a picture in his mind of any creature he had met, animal or human. Scraps of bodies, of landscapes, hands, eyes, lines and colours evoking nothing, rose and climbed out of sight before him. It was his experience that this should be stopped, whenever possible, before the deeper coils were reached (*M*, 141)

Murphy has retreated to a (green) place of 'soaking tuffets'. It is at this point that Murphy himself is removed from the picture. We saw earlier how Proust's Bergotte dies at the moment of humiliation in front of the Vermeer painting. Murphy faces a similar fate in front of Bellini. (This is an image that also takes us back to the contents of the earlier story 'Yellow' and to fears of castration and murder.) Bergotte is redeemed in death through the Proustian narrator. Similarly, Murphy has a redeemer.

Following his death, it is Celia who offers him a chance of redemption. While Celia is in the motion of being thrust forward on her own path towards death, she witnesses "all [Murphy's] colours of light streaming back into the past" (*M*, 144). The final *All Out* comes with a vision of Celia's "yellow hair" (*M*, 158) as it falls across her face and her closed eyes.

Celia establishes a counterpoint to Bram Van Velde's inner dark. She is the failure always about to happen — the image of the other in whom Murphy sees himself and, similarly, the other that is both his reflection and its witness. As the story began with Murphy's 'colours' being projected into a future, so at the end his colours stream back into the past. Like his predecessor, Belacqua, Murphy is not his own liberator. Yet, he is remembered by the nurses with "a touch of awe, as the male nurse that went mad with his colours nailed to the mast" (*M*, 139). His final liberation is witnessed in colour terms.

In Proust and Three Dialogues, Beckett writes that suffering "opens a window on the real and is the main condition of the artistic experience" (*PD*, 28). In a later piece, written in 1946, he calls upon this suffering in colour terms:

> It took me a long time, my lifetime so to speak, to realise that ***the colour*** of an eye half seen, or the source of some distant sound, are closer to Giudecca in the hell of unknowing than the existence of God, or the origins of protoplasm, or the existence of self, and even less worthy than these to occupy the wise. It's a bit much, a lifetime, to achieve this consoling conclusion, it doesn't leave you much time to profit by it[121]

This is an extract from 'First Love' written in memory of a dead father. Giudecca is in reference to Dante, to the level in hell that is closest to Satan. The vital point here is that the uncertainty of colour, of what can be seen, is a source of greater doubt than the existence of God, the origins of protoplasm, the existence of self. An eye half seen is an eye on the inner and the outer. As Belacqua

[121] Beckett, 'First Love' in The Complete Short Prose, 1929-1989, p. 43.

states in 'Yellow': "What were the eyes anyway? The posterns of the mind. They were safer closed" (*Y*, 173). To keep the eyes closed is to look only inwardly. Yet opening the eyes "so that little flaws of dawn gushed into [the] mind" (*Y*, 176) is, equally, a vision of the hell of unknowing: it produces a colour only half seen. The colours of the external world flicker amongst the colour of the inner sphere. In a statement by Wilfred Bion, Beckett's analyst, this predicament is set in terms of object relations: "we not only take in an object through the eyes, we also eject objects through the eyes"[122]. These are the two sides of the Van Velde brothers: the one cannot see the object because "the object is what it is"[123], the other cannot see the object being "I am what I am"[124]. If Beckett fails this predicament in his own work (as he himself claims) in that objects can be searched for and, to some extent, found — then he succeeds in that the 'object' is endlessly displaced, constantly slipping away. The hallucinatory object that, I have argued, Beckett experiences in front of a painting by Van Velde has been described as subconscious forms where "reality is no more than an unrecognisable memory"[125]. Such 'unrecognisable memories' are there in Beckett's fictions and render a hallucinatory quality to his writing that, through an analysis of colour, sheds light on his work in a way that both draws in and rejects the reader at every turn.

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[122] Cited in Christopher Bollas, The Shadow of the Object: Psychoanalysis of The Unthought Known, (London: Free Association Books, 1987), p. 154.
[123] Beckett, *The New Object*, in Bram Van Velde, p. 167.
[124] Ibid., p. 167.
[125] Cited in a catalogue of works on Bram Van Velde, Knoedler Galleries.

Life stories

Up to now, I have explored the philosophical premise of unrepresentability in Beckett's aesthetic. I now want to trace a web of associations with a potentially more biographical nexus to argue that 'unrecognisable memories' colour Beckett's fiction and allow us to identify a tension or distinction between hallucination/fantasy and reconstituted reminiscence. In my chapter on Woolf, I explore a borderline and coloured zone as making visible Woolf's preoccupation with death. In my reading of The Years I follow a philosophical argument about subject/object relations and the nature of perception. I also make a biographical turn in which, I argue, Woolf's most private — or unspeakable — elements of experience begin to seep through into her writing. Thoughts of death and of suicide can be seen to emerge. My reading of Beckett will now take a psychobiographical turn that takes further the allusions to personal life that I make in Woolf. I have argued that 'anxiety' is central not only to Beckett's concerns about writing and the creative dilemma of expression (and its impossibility), but to the ontological questions that underpin his work. In my chapter on Woolf, I call attention to anxiety with particular relevance to the stated autobiographical element of her writing. Recall, for instance, she says that writing The Years places her in a state of "constant effort, anxiety, & risk"[126]. I now want to develop the way in which anxiety in Beckett can, equally, be traced to autobiographical aspects of his writing (I have already introduced this through reference to his sittings with Bion[127]). In Woolf, I argue that the string of connections Bann makes in relation to Ruskin are, to a certain extent, played out among the fictional characters she creates. In Beckett, I will make a similar psychoanalytic turn with the effect of bringing to the surface of his writing key

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[126] The Diaries of Virginia Woolf, 28 July 1934, Vol IV, p. 233. Cited in Lee, Virginia Woolf, p. 639.
[127] Didier Anzieu makes a reading of Beckett in which he claims that Beckett's analysis with Wilfred Bion is performed as a novelistic self-analysis from *Murphy* to *How It Is*, containing "his suffering, his resentments, his violence, his negativity, his self-destructive impulses aimed at certain bodily organs as well as at his thought", Beckett et le psychanalyste, (Editions Mentha, 1992, pp. 200, 203), cited in Leo Bersani and Ulysse Dutoit, Arts of Impoverishment: Beckett, Rothko, Resnais (Massachusetts & London: Harvard University Press, 1993), p. 212..

figures and moments from his life as they can be situated within the discussion of life/death that I have drawn out so far in both Woolf and Beckett (and to a lesser extent in Richardson).

Recall Beckett's statement "I don't know what it is, having never seen anything like it before. It seems to have nothing to do with art, in any case, if my memories of art are correct" (*PD*, 126). As already discussed, what appears to be at work here is a process of 'unrecognisable memories' that fit into Beckett's model of art not in pursuit of occasion. Thus, it becomes clear that the question of occasion leads to that of memory as a discrete albeit connected issue. A tension can be seen to emerge between the philosophical premise of unrepresentability in Beckett's aesthetic and a biographical turn that, as I will show, takes us into the realm of 'unrecognisable' memories as another hallucinatory quality that colours Beckett's fiction. As in Woolf and Richardson, Beckett is involved in a philosophical response to perception. Neverthless, a speculative reading of 'Yellow' can be made in which psychobiographical elements perform a textual interplay in which the working of memory — or 'unrecognisable memories' — can be drawn into the hallucinatory quality to the writing as I have been discussing it. Links can be made with biographical details and events from Beckett's lived life as, perhaps, underlying the philosophical premise of unrepresentability that I have been tracing.

In 'Yellow', Belacqua states his intention to preserve the family name no matter what the cost to his own mind. For all he (Belacqua) cared "his mind might cave in" (*Y*, 172). His preparation for the experience that he "shall not remember" (*Y*, 172) is to spare "The grand old family [...] his late family [...] the family [...] guts" (*Y*, 172) the embarrassment of what might happen in the event of a suspension of his vigilance. These remarks can be considered in the light of Beckett's reported tortuous and difficult family history.

In biographies of Beckett by both Deirdre Bair and James Knowlson, we are told that Beckett was often the cause of much embarrassment to his mother. His 'life of the mind' caused her considerable consternation. According to Bair's biography, Beckett's mother thought him a wastrel son, a

disappointment, and unconvinced of his skill as a writer constantly badgered Beckett to acquire what she thought of as a 'proper job' — the kind that would command respect within their social circles — and which that offers the promise of financial wealth and security. Beckett's relationship with his mother was never a simple one. Throughout Beckett's formative years, and until her death in 1950, May Beckett tried to influence her son or impose her view of what he should or should not do. They rarely saw eye to eye and May's expectations for Beckett did not match Beckett's own. Their relationship thus became a love/hate bond and her anxiety on his behalf Beckett described as her "savage loving"[128]. Throughout his early life, mind and body are plagued by psychosomatic symptoms: boils, cysts, headaches, erratic heart pounding, night tremors and sweats, insomnia, breathlessness and severe constipation. Beckett's most healing moments — physically and creatively — are those spent in exile. Dream of Fair to Middling Women is written in Paris. More Pricks Than Kicks is written between sojourns in Ireland, London and Paris. Murphy is written during a period in London. Watt is written while Beckett is in a 'double' state of exile, having fled Paris and the Nazis to become secondarily exiled in rural France. Throughout his life, Beckett sought exile from the overbearing nature of his mother, finding refuge often with his father, Bill Beckett. Yet a turning point comes in 1933 when Beckett is 27. On 26 June 1933, Beckett's father suffered a multiple heart attack and died. Subsequently, Beckett becomes a virtual prisoner at the family home in Cooldrinagh. The mourning imposed by his mother coupled with his financial dependence, according to close friends and doctors, caused the bouts of frustration, rage and blind panic that Beckett was experiencing at that time. It is at this point, shortly following the death of his father, that Beckett goes into severe mental and physical decline. No longer able to urinate and suffering severe flashes of pain in the lower abdomen and pelvic regions, his psychosomatic symptoms resemble impotence.

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[128] Knowlson, Damned To Fame: The Life of Samuel Beckett, p. 22.

It is this fear that, as Deirdre Bair writes, finally brought Beckett to analysis:

> After my father's death I had trouble psychologically. The bad years were between when I had to crawl home in 1932 and after my father's death in 1933 [...] I was walking down Dawson Street. And I felt I couldn't go on. It was a strange experience I can't really describe. I found I couldn't go on moving.[129]

It is at this time that Beckett is writing the stories in More Pricks Than Kicks. The death of Beckett's father in June and Beckett's rapid psychical decline, reflected in outward physical symptoms, closely parallel events and concerns in 'Yellow'. Indeed, the title 'Yellow' could be phonetically traced to his father's death in June (Juin/jaune/yellow). Beckett's symptoms are mirrored in the story: the removal of external symptoms will not make good the possibility that Belacqua's "mind might cave in" (*Y*, 172). To save the "family guts" (*Y*, 172) Belacqua dons yellow mask and prepares to be kicked into his mind by the world. To suffer the consequences of unconscious entry his mind is made as ready as possible; he puts a good face on for the nurses. It is interesting therefore, not only to compare Belacqua's masking of his real persona, or desires, with the demands made upon Beckett by his mother but, more, to recall that Beckett's mother was in fact a nurse. It was in her role as nurse that she met Beckett's father. I want to consider for a moment how this meeting can be brought into a discussion of 'Yellow'.

Before he met May Roe, Beckett's mother, Bill Beckett "had fallen head over heels in love with a young woman named Eva Murphy"[130]. This love affair was doomed owing to Eva's being the daughter of a wealthy Catholic who, fiercely opposed to their daughter marrying into the Protestant Beckett family, is reported to have said that "his daughter could go on to the streets, he would never talk to her again, if she married Bill Beckett"[131]. Bill Beckett never got over this love affair. Beckett recalls his father as having said that Mr Murphy "murdered love"[132]. Following his break-up with

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[129] Ibid., p. 172.
[130] Ibid., p. 13.
[131] Ibid., pp. 12-13.
[132] Ibid., p. 13.

Eva, Bill Beckett spent a time in the Adelaide Hospital suffering from severe depression. It was here that he met Beckett's mother, May, a resident nurse. Interesting to note is that Samuel Beckett's first love is Ethna MacCarthy. In Beckett's fiction, Ethna is said to be the role model for the Alba. Again, what is of particular interest is that Alba is the Italian word for *dawn*. This fictional naming has in itself a string of possible connections with birth/death that reaches back to my reading of 'Yellow'. Yet another fiction can be brought into play that precedes it. Ethna MacCarthy has the same initials as Eva Murphy, Bill Beckett's first, lost, love. If Beckett's first love, Ethna-Alba-dawn (*Alba* begins "Before morning you shall be here"[133]) suggests birth and beginning, then his father's first love, Eva-eve, is polarised as death, end. The linking of these two events, two women, birth and death, beginning and end, I want to suggest, is made visible as *another* yellow.

To return to the story, nurses come and go administering their duties upon Belacqua. The place "seemed full of grey women [...] like a dream" (*Y*, 185). Only one of the nurses is given a proper name, Miranda. Unlike the 'grey' nameless women, Miranda can be linked to a hue other than grey and, as I will show, draws the reader into a realm other than 'dream'. It is Miranda who tells him the hour he is "being done" (*Y*, 178). Miranda bandages, injects, takes him to the operating theatre and paints his penis yellow: his "little bump of amativeness" (*Y*, 181). Amative is a rare word for amorous, from the Latin amãre – to love. Calling on a notion of 'past love' is sparked by a moment of recognition by Belacqua for Miranda: "Some malignant destiny pursued this splendid woman. Years later, when the rest of the staff was forgotten, she would drift into the mind" (*Y*, 181). The future becomes a memory. Belacqua turns to the past to find Miranda. Yet, his question — "Was it the same woman?" — remains open. Beckett could be seen to be making an uncertain reference to the woman whom his father met in the same situation, Beckett's mother. Miranda demands a return to the present: Belacqua's silent question is answered "Now" (*Y*, 181). But a transformation has

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[133] Beckett, 'Alba' in Collected Poems in English and French, p. 15.

already taken place as Belacqua transforms her into a voluptuous "bocca romana" (*Y*, 181) (Italian for mouth or opening) that is made sexually explicit by her action:

> She lashed into the part with picric and ether. It beat him to understand why she should be so severe on his little bump of amativeness. It was not septic to the best of his knowledge. Then why this severity? Merely on the off chance of its coming in for the fag-end of a dig? It was very strange. It had not even been shaved. It jutted out under the short hairs like a cuckoo's bill. He trusted it would come to no harm. Really he could not afford to have it curtailed. His little bump of amativeness
>
> (*Y*, 181)

It would be easy to read castration fears here. For instance, when Miranda has finished with him we are told: "Some people go, others leave. Belacqua felt like the rejected of those two that night in a bed. He felt he had set Miranda somehow against him. Was this then the haporth of paint?" (*Y*, 183). Belacqua is rejected, superfluous (to restate his own phrase). The inadequacy of his genitalia is confirmed in its only needing a "haporth" of paint to cover it, the subtly disguised (yellow) picric. Given the chain of phonetic links so far established, it is perhaps not surprising that this substance is coupled with *ether* in the painting of Belacqua's penis. Ether is colourless; a volatile and highly flammable liquid with a characteristic sweetish odour, used as a solvent and anaesthetic (also a rare word for air). To restate the chain of links: Ether-Ethna-Eva-eve-father's death. The 'murder' of Eva Murphy and Bill Beckett allows the meeting between Bill and May (Beckett's mother) to take place. In the way that Belacqua and Miranda potentially replay this meeting, there is a crossing of boundaries, of time, memory and histories that is reminiscent of my reading of Woolf's Antigone in The Years. It is in her role as nurse that May meets Beckett's father as he is hospitalised to recover from depression. That Mr Murphy "murdered love"[134] suggests not only his father's fear of impotence but that his father has in fact been 'murdered'. Links can be made here with the castration fears set out in Belacqua's story that leads back to Beckett's own statement cited earlier: "I have

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[134] Knowlson, Damned To Fame: The Life of Samuel Beckett, p. 13.

always had the feeling that somebody inside me had been murdered. Murdered before I was born [...] the feeling that I had never been born"[135].

There is a conflation of the visual and the spoken gesture that suggests *yellow* as a hallucinatory signifier: Beckett's 'superfluous birth' can be phonetically and visually linked to Mother-May-Miranda; equally, June-Juin-jaune-yellow links to Beckett's birth (recall his birth was officially registered in June) and his father's death in June. Lost experience moves towards a link with the (dead) father, (dead) love, Beckett's "feeling that somebody inside me had been murdered. Murdered before I was born"[136]. The trawling together of linguistic similarities is, however, perhaps over-simplifying or making too literal a connection between disparate elements across several interwoven 'stories'. While it might be fair to ask whether or not Belacqua's death is played out in a way that resembles the death(s) of Beckett's father — there are enough similarities that make the story easily reducible to such a reading — we might instead, or in addition to such a reading, trace the yellow of the title — the naming of an object that is lacking in the field of what is depicted — as leading to, or encrypting, *another real.*

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[135] Juliet, Conversations with Samuel Beckett and Bram Van Velde, p. 138
[136] Ibid., p. 138.

Chapter 5: 'Vision' and the Work of Art

In 1935 Virginia Woolf opened the Roger Fry Memorial Exhibition at Bristol art gallery in which she honours Fry as a critic who invites outsiders into the world of art and pictures. What is special about Fry's aesthetic, as Woolf sees it, is the union of two different qualities: "his reason and his sensibility"[1] working in harmony. Woolf bestows the essence of this union on Fry's Quaker background:

> While he was reasoning he was seeing; and while he was seeing he was reasoning. He was acutely sensitive, but at the same time he was uncompromisingly honest. Was this integrity, this honesty, a quality that he owed in part to his Quaker blood? He came [...] of a great Quaker family, and I have sometimes thought that this clarity, this sobriety of judgement, this determination to get beneath are qualities that go with a Quaker upbringing [...] his understanding of art owed much to his understanding of life[2]

Fry's Quaker background as a spiritual dimension in his aesthetic is vital to Woolf's memorial speech and to her biography of Fry. A peculiar religious sensibility, rare coming from Woolf, encapsulates thinking and seeing as a direct route to spirituality, albeit the spirituality that Woolf allows to surface is one that is firmly cloistered within the domain of art and imagination, or art and life. At the point where Woolf acknowledges Fry's debt to Quakerism, the aesthetic sensibility he distends operates at the level of a spiritual 'inheritance'. Barely registered traces of Fry's Quakerism are taken up within Woolf's aesthetic through an associative gesture: if the revelatory potential of Fry's aesthetic is rooted in Quaker beliefs then Woolf's own aesthetic experience, in its indebtedness to Fry, has a grain of religious or spiritual anchorage. Not only does Woolf's memorial speech unsettle the atheistic position she so often assumes but, as I will go on to argue, it also implies that atheism and spirituality are not necessarily incompatible. Again, in a letter to Vita Sackville-West, Woolf reformulates religious uncertainty in humanistic

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[1] Virginia Woolf, 'The Roger Fry Memorial Exhibition: An Exhibition Opened by V. Woolf on July 12 1935 at Bristol Museum & Art Gallery', (Letchworth: Garden City Press, 1972), p. 6.
[2] Ibid., pp. 6-7.

terms: "our belief is hardly perceptible to us [...] we *do* believe, not in God though: not one anyhow [...] Perhaps I mean, belief is almost unconscious. And the living belief now is in human beings"[3]. Woolf's statement defies orthodox religion or the rationale required to take up an atheist position in preference to some other, less certain or quantifiable structure of belief.[4] Likewise, Richardson: "What is Christianity? Where are Christians? [...] Convents and monasteries stop your mind. But there is a God or a Christ, there is something always there to answer when you turn away to it from everything" (*P*, II, 358). Belief oscillates in a borderline state between conscious and unconscious thought processes, only partially accessible in either direction.

In the essay written some 12 years earlier, 'Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown', Woolf's conviction forms the bedrock of her literary imagination and modernist temper. As I have already discussed in my chapter on Woolf, it is here that she famously states that "in or around December 1910 human character changed" (*BB*, 70) and pays indirect homage to Fry (recall this is a moment that coincides with the first Post-Impressionist show in London organised by Fry). Fry's unity of art and life, of "reasoning"[5] and "seeing"[6], is viewed by Woolf as essential to the writerly process and the creation of character. Addressing her essay to the Cambridge Heretics on 18 May 1924 and beginning with the invocation of a demon rather than muse: "I asked myself [...] what demon whispered in my ear" (*BB*, 69), Woolf impels the reader towards an atheistic position that, again, has an element of doubt. Woolf's 'what' is pivotal and extends towards more than one kind of demon. According to the OED, demon in its Latin variant and most popular guise is as an evil spirit or devil. Yet the Greek meaning is of a spirit or deity and is set in the context of genius: '*the demon of inspiration*'. Demon is another word for genius or demigod: a person or inner

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[3] Virginia Woolf, letter to V. Sackville-West dated 29th June 1936, in Leave the Letters Till We're Dead: The Letters of Virginia Woolf 1936-1941, (ed.) Nigel Nicolson, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1980), p. 50.
[4] Dorothy Richardson expresses similar concerns in a letter to Peggy Kirkaldy dated October 19, 1946: "One thing, surely, should always be borne in mind: atheism & rationalism, whether refusals to accept current definitions of X, or rooted in an out-of-date materialism, are primarily masculine contributions to the common stock, part of the price men risk paying for their preoccupation with things [...] rather than with persons", in Windows on Modernism: Selected Letters of Dorothy Richardson, p. 548.
[5] Woolf, 'The Roger Fry Memorial Exhibition', p. 6.
[6] Ibid., p. 6.

voice with outstanding or godlike attributes. In Woolf's essay, the whispering demon is introduced in a human guise: "a little figure rose before me — the figure of a man, or of a woman, who said, My name is Brown. Catch me if you can" (*BB*, 69). In the next paragraph the elusive form becomes a chase to catch "the phantom" (*BB*, 69). By the essay's conclusion, Woolf is seeking to capture "the spirit we live by, life itself" (*BB*, 87). The enigma Woolf pursues is mirrored in her choice of naming. As I have stressed in my earlier chapter, brown is an indistinct colour made up from all other colours, while at the same time a common English name. In both contexts, 'Brown' suggests a uniqueness, or essence, that is hard to pin down. The inner voice or demon of inspiration, Woolf's 'spirit', conjures a visionary experience that is not contained or containable within a religious vortex but is distilled into a broader context of enquiry that, as I discuss in my Woolf chapter, crosses personal and cultural memory.

Woolf's 'Brown' hovers around spirituality in a similar way to Richardson's "getting in touch with X"[7]: both writers are involved in a search for a phantom, or an enigmatic component to selfhood. The way this search moves, it could be argued, towards an essentially religious, or mystical, temperament will be the focus of this chapter. In a dynamic of origins, memory and the ineffable, between dark and light, mysticism and orthodoxy, the ontological questions raised in my chapters on Woolf, Richardson and Beckett can be brought into dialogue through the spiritual move each seems to be making. T. S. Eliot will be introduced as a point of contrast and comparison. According to critic Paul Murray, Eliot's understanding of mysticism can be summarised under three headings: "as a path of negation" [8], as an "ecstasy of thought"[9] and as "an incommunicable vision"[10]. The fusion of these elements — negation, extremity of thought, incommunicable visions — forges a perhaps unexpected link between the writers in this thesis. There is a colouring of mystical qualities in Woolf, Richardson and Beckett which, I will argue, reappears in Eliot with the effect of creating havoc across some of the most theological

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[7] Letter from Richardson to Peggy Kirkaldy, October 19, 1946. Cited in Windows on Modernism: Selected Letters of Dorothy Richardson, p. 549.
[8] Paul Murray, T. S. Eliot & Mysticism: The Secret History of Four Quartets, (London: Macmillan, 1991), p.5.
[9] Ibid., p.5.
[10] Ibid., p.5.

distinctions and destinations of his writing. The ineffable part of spirituality is located in questions of origins, national identity, personal and cultural memory as well as in an abstract idea of a universal, absolute spirit. In my chosen writers, this dynamic involves a deepening of both paths that is, at the same time, a challenge to theological authority. Eliot draws the themes discussed in my previous chapters into what I will address here as a making visible of 'the spiritual'.

In my chapter on Woolf, I have explored a moment between sleeping and waking, between living and dying that finds expression in a 'borderline' zone in which personal memory and a more archaic and unknown past that is bound up 'within' personal memory can be seen to collide. It is this borderline place, I argue, that brings an ineffable quality to Woolf's writing. In Beckett's writing, I have argued that autobiographical elements of his lived life can be located and that these take the form of hallucinatory objects or 'unrecognisable memories', unrecognisable in that they belong not to Beckett but, for example, to Beckett's father. In Richardson, my concerns are to do with a quality of thought, or selfhood, through which Miriam Henderson transforms the external world and renders it visible as an extension of her own particular way of seeing. As discussed earlier, her sense of London is crucial to this dynamic and activates an almost theological turn: "golden streaming Regent Street [...] the pavement of heaven" (*P*, I, 416). In each of these writers there is an unspeakable quality to experience that, as I have argued, is rendered visible through the theme of colour. In this chapter, I will argue that the strands of such 'unspeakable' experience can be mapped onto a spiritual dimension in their work. Woolf's writings ask 'Who am I'; Richardson asks 'What is self?'; Beckett asks 'What is it?' It is here that Eliot offers a point of dialogue. While each of these writers appear to be searching for an essence of selfhood, Eliot situates a similar set of questions within a framework of *religious* doubt[11] in which philosophical uncertainty is no less central. Richardson qualifies the link as she sees it: "the real difficulty is not between science and religion at all, but between religion and *philosophy*"

[11] In a biography of Eliot, Lyndall Gordon discusses the way in which true faith is, for Eliot, a conviction that is based on doubt. Eliot says: "For people of intellect I think that doubt is inevitable [...] The doubter is a man who takes the problem of his faith seriously", Gordon, T S Eliot: An Imperfect Life, (London: Vintage, 1998), p. 112.

(*P*, III, 170). Again, Richardson: "What is Christianity? Where are Christians" (*P*, II, 358). In 'Dawn's Left Hand', the story in which Miriam Henderson makes her move into the Quaker faith, Richardson figures the question of 'souls' in relation to colour and the philosophical tradition which argues colour's status as primary or secondary: "She's very wary and a little scornful of all my people. Of all those I hand out. Wary of souls. Thinks the soul secondary. Coloured. Almost visible" (*P*, IV, 243). As we will see, for Miriam Henderson, the soul — if we set it in the context of Richardson's 'X' — like colour, is primary and visible.

Woolf colours the elusive 'spirit' of the modern character ("the spirit we live by, life itself" (*BB*, 87)) in a brown hue, a colour that includes within it the potential of all other colours. Brown thus allows Woolf to incorporate Fry's Quakerism — in the way that it extends beyond his own consciousness to enter into dialogue with others — into her own aesthetic and spiritual inheritance. In her musings on aesthetics, Woolf sees Fry as able to catch hold of a play of colour on the canvas. The "silent inscrutable patterns, treasure houses with locked doors"[12] often barred to view start to flash with "light and colour"[13] with "life and colour"[14] and come to represent for Woolf "the spirit we live by" (*BB*, 87). Whatever Woolf is gesturing towards in her declaration of 'light' and 'life', the vital ingredient or pivotal point between the two is colour. It is colour that appears to offer the 'life'-giving ingredient in Fry's modernist agenda for purity of form and the distinction he makes between artistic composition and what is essential to ordinary life. As Richardson's 'X' is cast in a lurid light that moves across a monochromatic colour scale from yellow to gold, so Woolf's vital ingredient that accompanies 'light' and 'life' is expressed in colour terms. In her memoir 'A Sketch of the Past', begun in 1939, Woolf writes:

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[12] Woolf, 'The Roger Fry Memorial Exhibition', p. 4.
[13] Ibid., p. 4.
[14] Ibid., p. 4.

> If life has a base that it stands upon, if it is a bowl that one fills and fills and fills — then my bowl without a doubt stands upon this memory. It is of lying half asleep, half awake, in bed in the nursery at St Ives. It is of hearing the waves breaking, one two, one, two, and sending a splash of water over the beach; and then breaking, one, two, one two, *behind a yellow blind.* It is of hearing the blind draw its little acorn across the floor as the wind blew the blind out. It is of lying and hearing this splash and *seeing this light*, and feeling, it is almost impossible that I should be here; of feeling the purest ecstasy I can conceive[15] (*my emphasis*)

Suzanne Raitt's study of Woolf and Vita Sackville West draws attention to this scene as forming part of Woolf's "mystic narrative [...] a private rhapsodic feeling that she experienced when she was a child"[16] that is recalled in memory. As Raitt suggests, Woolf's moment of 'purest ecstasy' merges personal memory with a more mystical yearning for the ineffable. The image conjured returns to a place of origin: "my first memory [...] the most important of all my memories"[17] while at the same time seems to indicate concern with a religious or mystical dimension: "seeing this light [...] the purest ecstasy I can conceive". Seeing light — or seeing light in darkness — is traditionally associated with mystical or religious visionary experiences. Particular to Woolf's experience, however, is the play of colour that emerges from such experience: Woolf captures what she refers to as "my first memory [...] the most important of all my memories"[18] as the feeling of "lying in a grape and seeing through a film of semi-transparent yellow [...] I remember the dark; the lights"[19]. Yellow is a colour normally associated with light. Yet, Woolf sets yellow within a context of both light *and* dark. It is behind a "yellow blind" (*blind*ness being associated with dark, or unseeing) that Woolf experiences her first memory[20]. It is through a film of semi-transparent yellow that Woolf recalls the "dark" (or blindness) and "the lights" — "this light [...] the purest ecstasy I can conceive". Yellow is a seeming paradox for Woolf. Like Richardson's monochromatic scale from gold to yellow, in Woolf, yellow is a hue that moves between dark

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[15] Virginia Woolf, 'A Sketch of the Past' in Moments of Being: Unpublished Autobiographical Writings, (London: Grafton, 1989), p. 73.
[16] Suzanne Raitt, Vita and Virginia: The Work and Friendship of V. Sackville-West and Virginia Woolf, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993) p. 130.
[17] Woolf, 'A Sketch of the Past', in Moments of Being: Unpublished Autobiographical Writings, p. 73.
[18] Ibid., p. 73.
[19] Ibid., p. 74.
[20] The poet Wallace Stevens, famous for his use of colour, called yellow the 'first colour'. See Alexander Theroux, The Primary Colours: Three Essays, (London: Papermac, 1996; first publ. New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1994), p. 67.

and light; its "semi-transparent"[21] quality acts as a screen between seeing and not seeing. Yellow is a colour of movement[22] made visible in the shifting moments of time and place that links Woolf's mystical experience to personal memory.

It is via this dynamic — between origins, memory and the ineffable, between dark and light experienced in colour terms — that Woolf's image, I will argue, can be put into dialogue with similarly 'coloured' mystical visions that emerge in the writings of Richardson, Beckett and Eliot. Woolf sets the paradox of darkness in light — and vice versa — in a yellow hue that effects a movement which, as she writes elsewhere, makes belief "hardly perceptible"[23]. Given that the mystical evocation that underpins Woolf's belief is rooted in a sense of origins and memory, the "hardly perceptible" reaches beyond, or takes a different direction from, religious questioning. Like Beckett's "omnipresence"[24] of a dim yellow light"[25], particularly striking in 'The Lost Ones', yellow is the hue through which the movement from light to dark — from seeing to non-seeing and vice versa — is triggered[26]. Woolf's 'within': "our belief is hardly perceptible to us [...] the living belief now is *in* human beings"[27] — as a borderline state between conscious and unconscious thought processes[28] — connects with internal spaces that are equally problematic for Beckett. In my chapter on Beckett I have traced the colour yellow as it can be connected to intrauterine memories and the sense of having never been born. Here, origins and memory

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[21] Woolf, 'A Sketch of the Past', in Moments of Being: Unpublished Autobiographical Writings, p. 74.
[22] The colour theory of Schoenmaeker cites yellow as colour of movement: "Yellow is the movement of the radius. The pure yellow colour is a radiant colour; of all the colours yellow is the brightest or most light-giving; it spreads out in space, it flares and leaps out and wants to be the centre of all movement in space". Cited in Modern Art and Modern Science: The Parallel Analysis of Vision, ed. Paul C. Vitz & Arnold B. Glimcher, (New York: Prager Publications, 1984), p. 102.
[23] Virginia Woolf, letter to V. Sackville-West dated 29th June 1935, in Leave the Letters Till We're Dead: The Letters of Virginia Woolf 1936-1941, vol. 6, (ed.) Nigel Nicolson, p. 50.
[24] Beckett, 'The Lost Ones' in The Complete Short Prose, 1929-1989, p. 202.
[25] Ibid., p. 202.
[26] Hélène Baldwin draws attention to the description of a light which is 'omnipresent' in 'The Lost Ones'. She writes: "the use of this word [omnipresent], so often applied to God in traditional theology, is significant. "Light" as commonly used by all mystics, including Dante, and by T. S. Eliot and Beckett himself, certainly refers to the divine [...] The light, of course, is dim, as the divine light would be dimly apprehended by mortals". In Samuel Beckett's Real Silence, (Pennsylvania & London: The Pennsylvania State University, 1981), pp. 126-127.
[27] Woolf, letter to V. Sackville-West dated 29th June 1936, in Leave the Letters Till We're Dead: The Letters of Virginia Woolf 1936-1941, p. 50.
[28] I am using 'unconscious' in this context as a term for the imperceptible/ungraspable as opposed to the psychoanalytic use of the term as reference to a 'dynamic repressed' (although the psychoanalytic 'unconscious' is referenced in my earlier chapters on Woolf and Beckett).

collide in an ineffable realm that is not unlike Woolf's: barely perceptible. Both Beckett and Woolf mobilise inwardness within a problematic of subject and object relations. This is equally the case in Richardson and Eliot, although Richardson and Eliot appear to express inner spirituality (again in colour terms) with more certainty. In *Pilgrimage*, inwardness is coloured golden and moves towards the light, or, as Richardson writes in her book on the Quakers, has "*obedience* to the "inner light [...] within"[29]. As I have discussed, Richardson transforms the landscape with the colour of inwardness: "Oberland again; its golden light, and its way of making its outer world conform to its inner. Something of heaven, precarious, but temporarily closing the doors of hell" (*P*, IV, 157). In Eliot's famous mystical work, *Four Quartets*, "a strong brown god"[30] is located in the river of Eliot's childhood home, yet in a more mystical move the poet suggests we look "within us" (*FQ*, 205).

This chapter will trace the relation of inner and outer to spiritual concerns to argue that in Woolf, Richardson and Beckett, just as in Eliot, writing moves into a sacred or 'visionary' space (a spiritual connection is, of course, made clear in Richardson's title, *Pilgrimage*[31]). A key question that this raises is whether a move into the spiritual is the same thing as a move into the internal space of the imagination[32]. In Woolf, Richardson and Beckett there is much that would seem to suggest this is the case. However, as I will show, colour permits a bridging of the gulf between inside and outside in which the internal space of the imagination and a more transcendental form

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[29] Dorothy Richardson, The Quakers Past and Present, (London: Constable & Co, 1914), p. 37.

[30] T S Eliot, *Four Quartets* in T S Eliot, Collected Poems 1909-1962, (Faber and Faber, 1936), p. 205: "I do not know much about gods; but I think that the river / Is a strong brown god — sullen, untamed and intractable / ... / The river is within us" (lines 1-15); (hereafter cited *FQ*).

[31] Jean Radford discusses Richardson's choice of naming and its link to a spiritual quest: "a journey with specific religious or spiritual reference which only the word 'pilgrimage' could provide". She continues: "The word 'pilgrimage' was not always simply a metaphor, of course, it once had a literal meaning as an institution of the Latin Church: in the medieval period it meant a journey to a sacred place undertaken as an act of religious devotion [...] the resonance of 'pilgrimage' as an image continued in various forms throughout the nineteenth century [...] the emphasis shifts from a physical to a mental landscape [...] a psychic terrain which looks back to the language of the Romantic poets and forward to that of Freud", Dorothy Richardson, pp. 25-26.

[32] Kandinsky writes that the laws of internal necessity "may quite correctly be described as spiritual" [Complete Writings on Art, Vol II, 1922-1943, (ed.) Kenneth C. Lindsay & Peter Vergo, (London: Faber and Faber, 1982), p. 176.] Again, Kandinsky writes: "Everything external necessarily conceals within itself the internal" [Complete Writings on Art, Vol II, p. 165]. Kandinsky discusses internal necessity as 'inner sound' that he links to modulations of colour. He composed a theatrical piece entitled *The Yellow Sound* which draws from Shaman (mystical) tradition and ritual thus reflecting the spiritual tradition in which he can be located.

of spirituality are rooted back into personal and cultural memory. I will argue that this is similarly visible in Eliot. The relation between spirituality as interior and a more orthodox, exterior divinity is a further crucial dynamic to the theological associations that flood Eliot's poetics. Eliot draws differing notions of the divine into dialogue with a more secular authority. This forms a link to Woolf, Richardson and Beckett. For each of these writers, personal and cultural memory is inseparable from structures of belief. In past chapters we have seen how colour acts as an interface between the limitations of writing and unspeakable elements of experience that can be seen to be located within its texture. In this chapter, it is the links that can be made from here to an understanding of creativity as a form of 'vision' — rooted in a sense of the spiritual that extends beyond strictly religious boundaries — that will form the focal point of the discussion.

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Visionary experience: spirit, imagination, memory

According to Lyndall Gordon, Eliot's biographer, Eliot made copious notes from Evelyn Underhill's Mysticism (1911), copying in detail one passage that explains 'vision' as a work of art derived from actual experiences:

> If we would cease, once for all, to regard visions and voices as objective, and be content to see in them forms of symbolic expression, ways in which the subconscious activity of the spiritual self reaches the surface-mind, many of the disharmonies noticeable in visionary experience which have teased the devout, and delighted the agnostic, would fade away. Visionary experience ... is a picture which the mind constructs ... from raw materials already at its disposal[33]

[33] Cited in Gordon, T. S. Eliot: An Imperfect Life, p. 89.

Underhill seems to be suggesting that visionary experience comes from a source of memory as it collides with immediate perception: it is "a picture which the mind constructs from raw materials already at its disposal"[34]. On one level this is what can be seen to be taking place in the writers considered here. Miriam Henderson's 'golden' life within transforms the landscape from which its raw materials are taken: "golden streaming Regent Street [...] the pavement of heaven" (*P*, I, 416). Beckett's 'yellow' constructs pictures that work to 'reconstruct' planes of memory that are unrecognisable. Woolf's 'brown' latches onto (un)identifiable persons that hint at a broader picture of cultural and archaic inheritance (witnessed again in the play of yellow as I have traced it in The Years). Eliot's "brown God" *(FQ, 205)* is situated in the recalled Mississippi River of his ancestral home (it appears in the 2nd line of *The Dry Salvages* which is the name given to a small group of rocks off the N.E. coast of Cape Ann, Massachusetts). However, another set of elements would appear to disturb this (already perhaps rare and unusual) picture collection. Richardson's monochromatic "X"[35], Woolf's "spirit" (*BB*, 87) that goes by the name of Brown, Beckett's inner dark or "really yellow spot" (*M*, 54), Eliot's brown God — or river — that "is within" (*FQ*, 205): each point to a more inaccessible level of consciousness. Here, the raw materials of memory are transmuted into phantom, into a vision that is constructed not so much from memory of past events but from memory as process. Underhill tries to accommodate such visionary experience, again in colour terms. In a work entitled The Golden Sequence, she writes:

> That psychic storehouse, with its accumulation of remembered experience — pains and pleasures, repulsions and attractions, images and notions — *colours* all our reactions to reality, and enchains us to our past. Still more disastrous is the constant presence [...] of the psychic rubbish heap[36]

Here, Underhill is citing colour in a very general way as experience that *colours* our reactions. Nevertheless, she is establishing a Freudian notion of a psychic storehouse that contains within it

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[34] Ibid., p. 89.
[35] Letter from Richardson to Peggy Kirkaldy, October 19, 1946. Cited in Windows on Modernism: Selected Letters of Dorothy Richardson, p. 549.
[36] Evelyn Underhill, The Golden Sequence: A Fourfold Study of The Spiritual Life, (London: Methuen, 1932), p. 127.

discarded or repressed elements, a "psychic rubbish heap"[37]. In the context of the earlier citation, thus it could be said that the spiritual part of "visionary experience"[38] ("a picture which the mind constructs ... from raw materials already at its disposal"[39] contains these elements. Memory and imagination work in harmony. The fusion results in a 'visionary experience' that is transformed into artistic form and contains within it a spiritual element or 'enlightenment' that has nowhere else to go. It is the way such a fusion of 'memory' and 'imagination' effects a move into the spiritual in my chosen writers that I now want to specifically focus. The apparent absence of revelation in Beckett, Woolf and Richardson[40] is unsettled by what starts to look more like 'indirectly intelligible' revelation. In other words, the relation between a possible 'moment' of religious revelation and its revealability — the possibility of manifestation — is central.

Beckett's fiction mobilises religious points of reference but resides within none of them. As in Woolf, 'the sacred' in Beckett is constantly drawn back into the domain of aesthetics. Beckett writes that all poetry "is prayer"[41]. Further, that prayer is "no more (no less) than an act of recognition"[42]; "a spasm of awareness"[43]; "self-absorption into light"[44]. Only great artists "dare to bring light"[45] to what Beckett terms "the issueless predicament of existence"[46]. Linking poetry to prayer — in great artists a moment of "self-absorption into light"[47] — Beckett takes the creative act into a mystical realm. The artistic process is raised to a status akin to spiritual enlightenment.

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[37] Ibid., p. 127.
[38] Cited in Gordon, T. S. Eliot: An Imperfect Life, p. 89.
[39] Ibid., p. 89.
[40] Of course, in Richardson's case I am talking about an apparent absence of revelation prior to Miriam Henderson's turn to Quakerism in the closing stories of Pilgrimage.
[41] Samuel Beckett, 'Humanistic Quietism' in Disjecta: Miscellaneous Writings and a Dramatic Fragment, p.68.
[42] Ibid, p. 68.
[43] Ibid., p. 69.
[44] Ibid., p. 69.
[45] Beckett, 'MacGreevy on Yeats', Disjecta, p. 97.
[46] Ibid., p. 97.
[47] Beckett, 'Humanistic Quietism', Disjecta, p. 69.

Beckett's 'occasion' that cannot be sought or acquired through learning takes on mystical significance.

In his writings on Proust, Beckett sees involuntary memory as a "mystic experience [that] recurs" (*PD*, 35). In my earlier chapter I discuss Beckett's analysis of voluntary and involuntary memory in relation to colour — the former as "pale and monochrome" (*PD*, 15) and the latter as "agitated and multicoloured" (*PD*, 15). Involuntary memory does not recur in the way of 'habit' but as an "accidental fugitive salvation" (*PD*, 35) that "delivers its triumphant ultimatum [...] this 'sacred action' [...] by some immediate and fortuitous act of perception" (*PD*, 36) that Beckett likens to the Proustian "red phrase" (*PD*, 35). This "sacred action" (*PD*, 36) of 'involuntary memory' takes as its sources and point of departure "the elements of communion" (*PD*, 36). The invocation of religious imagery — the ritual of Christ's body and the taking of bread — is, nevertheless, quickly distilled into a discussion on perception and the "spiritual development" (*PD*, 64) of the artist. The quality that for Woolf lies "deep sunk in pictures"[48] — the "biblical talent" that Kandinsky writes "must not be buried in the earth"[49] — is similarly expressed by Beckett as "the only possible spiritual development [...] the sense of depth [...] that only real and incommunicable essence of oneself" (*PD*, 64-65). Here, spiritual 'communion' becomes a dialogue between the subject and object relations that are a constant obsession in Beckett's writing and which, in the Van Velde brothers, becomes strangely fused in a series of paintings that communicate to Beckett the 'unrecognisable memories' that are the stuff of the Proustian involuntary memory. The problem that the artist faces, however, is that the "light, calm and finality"[50] associated with the mystical encounter is impossible to sustain. The artist constantly slips back into "habit"[51] — the Proustian realm of voluntary rather than involuntary (and potentially mystical) memory.

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[48] Woolf, 'The Roger Fry Memorial Exhibition', p. 5.
[49] Kandinsky, Complete Writings on Art I, trans. K. Lindsay & P. Vergo (eds.), (London: Faber and Faber, 1982, pp. 156-7.
[50] Beckett, 'Humanistic Quietism', Disjecta, p. 69.
[51] See Beckett, Proust and Three Dialogues for a lengthy discussion of what Beckett means by this.

The impossibility of sustaining heightened forms of consciousness is similarly recognised by Richardson in her apparent failure to prolong Henderson's transformative thinking. Similarly, Woolf's borderline zone between sleeping/waking, living/dying constantly slips from view. However, Beckett's model reveals such moments to contain the promise of involuntary memory. In the way that involuntary memory works to restore experience deemed lost, a bridge can be seen to emerge between the philosophical problem of unrepresentability and a more personal articulation of the spiritual as it emerges and dwells as a coloured aspect within their writings.

Just as Underhill draws together imagination and memory, so Beckett articulates imagination in a dynamic of the processes of *in*voluntary memory:

> the identification of immediate with past experience, the recurrence of past action or reaction in the present, amounts to a participation between the ideal and the real, imagination and direct apprehension, symbol and substance [...] thanks to this reduplication, the experience is at once imaginative and empirical, at once an evocation and a direct perception, real without being merely actual, ideal without being merely abstract, the ideal real, the essential, the extra-temporal [...] if this mystical experience communicates an extratemporal essence, it follows that the communicant is for the moment an extratemporal being [...] in the negation of Time and Death (*PD*, 74-75)

Beckett's language articulates the Proustian moment of involuntary memory: at once "the identification of immediate with past experience [...] an evocation and a direct perception, real without being merely actual". It is in the exaltation of this brief eternity — the meeting of "the ideal" (*PD*, 75) with "the real" (*PD*, 75), Beckett writes, that one "understands the necessity of art" (*PD*, 76). Aesthetics mobilises "the extra-temporal" (*PD*, 75) and invites "mystical experience" (*PD*, 75). From here, Beckett introduces a new idea — termed "*essence*" (*PD*, 75) — but without stating what is meant by this. He writes: "*if* this mystical experience communicates an extratemporal essence, it follows that the communicant is for the moment an extratemporal being (PD, 75, *my emphasis*)". Beckett's 'if' is crucial. While the mystical experience is not in question, where it leads is to a moment in which self is located in "the negation of Time and Death" (*PD*, 75) and is, for Beckett, a moment in which *essence* might be communicated. Beckett's analysis and the call to "essence" (*PD*, 75) that he introduces, I want to suggest, is contained

within the mystical motifs as I discuss them in each of my chosen writers: Richardson's monochromatic 'X' that moves from gold to yellow, Woolf's 'spirit we live by' that goes by the name of Brown, Beckett's 'really yellow spot', Eliot's 'brown God' or river that 'is within'. What we can see taking place is a moment in which imagination, the spiritual, and personal and cultural memory collide. Although within a philosophical frame of uncertainty, each appears to be defining a moment that invokes mystical language and constitutes, or invites, an *essence* of being. In Beckett's essay we move between what he refers to as "that only real and incommunicable essence of oneself" (*PD*, 65) and, later, an "extratemporal essence" (*PD*, 75) in which "the necessity of art" (*PD*, 76) can be found. What appears to be at stake here is the union of subject and object and the significance of aesthetics and mystical experience in this dynamic. How might the *essence* that Beckett articulates find expression as the interplay of the incommunicable with the extratemporal — as a moment that locates aesthetics and mysticism in the same realm?

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Inner self and exteriority

Writer Toni Morrison draws attention to the poetic as mystical space. Morrison writes that all water "has a perfect memory"[52]. She links this to the imaginative "flooding"[53] of the writer: both

[52] Toni Morrison, Out There — Marginalisation and Contemporary Culture, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), p. 305. Cited in Irit Rogoff, Terra Infirma: Geography's Visual Culture, (London & New York: Routledge, 2000), p. 109.
[53] Morrison, Out There — Marginalisation and Contemporary Culture, p. 305. Cited in Rogoff, Terra Infirma: Geography's Visual Culture, p. 109.

writer and river are engaged in a struggle "to get back where it was"[54]. This is an aesthetic that resonates in Beckett's intrauterine memories as return (as discussed in my earlier chapter). Similar imagery is there in Eliot and Woolf. In 'Burnt Norton', the opening section to *Four Quartets*, Eliot takes the reader into a garden inhabited with voices of dead and unborn children: "... the dead leaves [...] the leaves were full of children" (*FQ*, 190). As Morrison suggests, water is vital in Eliot's mystical imagery: "... the pool was filled with water out of sunlight" (*FQ*, 190) just as it is in Woolf: "hearing this splash and seeing this light"[55]. To enter this place, Eliot writes, is to enter "Into our first world" (*FQ*, 190). Again, this is close to Woolf's mystical vision introduced earlier and in which she returns to the nursery at St Ives. As in Woolf's mystical moment — "half asleep, half awake, in bed in the nursery [...] behind a yellow blind [...] feeling the purest ecstasy I can conceive"[56] — Eliot introduces us to a place of origins, a site of memory. According to Lyndall Gordon, Eliot's biographer, to enter this place "is to discover a lost world"[57]. However, the reader is not immediately invited to enter. The poem opens with an objective and philosophical view of time:

> Time present and time past
> Are both perhaps present in time future
> And time future contained in time past.
> If all time is eternally present
> All time is unredeemable (*FQ*, 189)

In the lines that follow an act of redemption nevertheless seems to take place. The poem rapidly develops into a place of *inner time* made visible as an epiphanic moment:

> To look down into the drained pool.
> Dry the pool, dry concrete, *brown edged*,
> And the pool was filled with water out of sunlight,
> And the lotos rose, quietly, quietly,
> The surface glittered out of heart of light,
> And they were behind us, reflected in the pool (*FQ*,190)

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[54] Morrison, Out There — Marginalisation and Contemporary Culture, p. 305. Cited in Rogoff, Terra Infirma: Geography's Visual Culture, p. 109.
[55] Woolf, 'A Sketch of the Past', in Moments of Being: Unpublished Autobiographical Writings, p. 73.
[56] Ibid., p. 73.
[57] Gordon, T S Eliot: An Imperfect Life, p. 267.

In these lines, interiority and exteriority are made complex in that Eliot sites an epiphanic moment — seemingly internal — in an external place. The dry pool is a place that suggests aridity, a barren waste like that depicted in *The Waste Land*. It is through an act of faith that a transformation takes place. The pool becomes filled with an epiphanic "water out of sunlight" (*FQ*, 190) that is a presence only through what it reflects and is reflected out of — the imagination. (Richardson makes a similar move when Henderson's consciousness transforms the external world into an extension of her 'golden' consciousness.) Eliot's 'they' is similarly conjured — the poem offers "reflections" of an absence that at the same time is a concretisation of mystical experience in physical reality.

In these lines we can see Beckett's "real without being merely actual" (*PD*, 75) — an *extratemporal* moment in which "the negation of Time and Death" (*PD*, 75) can be located as mystical encounter transformed into the poetic. While Beckett's description of an experience "at once imaginative and empirical, at once an evocation and a direct perception" (*PD*, 75) is grounded in what might appear as an image of pure negativity — there is a suggestion that the rising *lotos* both forms and is formed out of a construction around emptiness — this is resisted through a revolt of the imagination. Visions from a past not easily accessible can be seen to emerge in a fleeting moment of light in which personal and cultural memory are located within the image Eliot describes. The 'lotos' that Eliot refers to in line four, according to the OED, is a rare variation of *lotus*, of which one meaning is a plant or genus of the Old World and Eliot's ancestral North America. Further, *lotos* comes from Semitic language and is related to the Hebrew for myrrh, thus suggesting the gifts borne by the three wise men to the infant Jesus and its links to Eliot's Anglo-Catholicicism.

The rising *lotos* as both forming and formed out of a construction around emptiness suggests a mystical vision. A brown 'halo' frames the vision's appearance and disappearance — "the drained pool [...] brown edged [...] And the pool was filled with water out of sunlight / And the lotos rose, quietly, quietly" (*FQ*, 190) — these lines anticipate the "brown God" (*FQ*, 205) introduced soon after in 'The Dry Salvages'. Here, similarly, interiority is made complex in an external

setting: "... the river / Is a strong brown god [...] The river is within us...". (*FQ*, 205). While Eliot's 'brown God' is an image also sited in water, in this instance brown is not so much a framing device as what constitutes the vision. Again, similarities can be drawn here with Woolf's use of brown to make visible the modulations of character that cannot be directly known but cannot be subordinated to realist description. Between the two occurrences in Eliot's *Four Quartets*, what can be seen to be taking place is a playing out of Beckett's mystical communication that at the same time references the Catholic ritual of baptism: the imaginative and the empirical, evocation and direct perception collide. Brown acts as a 'transparent film' between inner and outer, mysticism and orthodoxy that is not unlike Woolf's yellow that affects a movement between seeing and not seeing, looking within and looking without. The difference in Eliot, perhaps, is that although an apparent mystical moment is described, it is unclear whether reference is being made to actual experience or an image made real only within the poetic — arguably the only space available for the mystical encounter that Eliot would seem to so desperately seek.

If we set Eliot alongside the perhaps more 'traditional' mystical poetry of Vita Sackville-West, Woolf's friend and one-time lover, the complexity in Eliot's lines becomes even more apparent. In 1931 the Hogarth Press published her poem *Sissinghurst*, dedicated to 'V.W.':

> I've sunk into an image, water-drowned
> Where stirs no wind and penetrates no sound,
> Illusive, fragile to a touch, remote,
> Foundered within the well of years as deep
> As in the waters of a stagnant moat[58]

These lines are steeped in imagery of death. Suzanne Raitt writes in her book on Vita and Virginia that during the 1930s Vita Sackville-West withdrew from London and the social political scene of impending war and the tightening hold of fascism. Sackville-West's introversion, Raitt

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[58] Cited in Raitt, Vita and Virginia: The Work and Friendship of V. Sackville-West and Virginia Woolf, pp. 117-118.

writes, was linked to her growing preoccupation with religion and mysticism. These lines are written during the pre-war years and roughly around the same time that Eliot is working on *Four Quartets*. Sackville-West's writing is pervaded by a longing for silence, for immersion, for seclusion and, as Raitt points out, the underwater world of *Sissinghurst* was a farewell to Woolf using one of the images of which Woolf was especially fond.

In contrast to Eliot, Sackville-West clearly states the poetic as a space in which mystical yearning can be experienced: "I've sunk into an image"[59]. Raitt discusses Sackville-West's imaging as a description of the blackout and as "something not unlike the mystics' 'negative way'"[60]. As is well known, mysticism underwent a general revival of interest during the early decades of the twentieth century. As Raitt points out, while there was an openness to Eastern mysticism the dominant tradition in England was Judaeo-Christian and patriarchal and Sackville-West was among those who, however problematically, situated themselves within that tradition. As in Eliot's lines cited above, there is more than a hint that the image is peopled by the dead, or the living that can be brought back to life[61]. However, a striking disparity exists between Sackville-

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[59] Ibid., pp. 117-118.
[60] Ibid., pp. 117-118.

[61] A sense of loss and of death pervades Eliot's writing. Cornelia Cook writes that the scriptural images found in *Four Quartets* are "a reminder of loss in earlier works". While imagery of loss and death is visible in *Four Quartets*, it is in this work that Eliot forces a confrontation with two significant acts of renewal or 'rebirth'. One is the Incarnation: "The hint half guessed, the gift half understood, is / Incarnation". The other is an act of baptism (and thus renewal) that conflicts with a vision of 'drowning' (and of death) that could be seen to be taking place in the river in which Eliot makes "the strong brown god" visible. Cook draws attention to water as "the essential source or signifier of spiritual renewal" and baptism as "an agency of repentance, leading to redemption [....] a purgation". Throughout scripture, water is the medium of baptism. In ancient times the purifying waters used in such ritual was, Cook writes, often from "a significant river or the sea". In 'The Dry Salvages' the scriptural image of baptism is a seemingly crucial one and takes place in "a significant river", in the Mississippi. Eliot's brown god is immersed in the waters of his ancestral home. The cleansing and spiritual renewal associated with the act of baptism is, here, not only interesting in the contextual comparison between *The Waste Land* and *Four Quartets* — with the later work performing spiritual renewal of the earlier work — but, also, as a 'rebirth' of ancestral destiny. As has already been noted, the waters of 'The Dry Salvages' bear direct reference to Eliot's ancestral home. In its symbolic form, Cook notes, water recalls the *origins* of baptism in antiquity :where the Greek word *baptidzo* signifying to dip and to immerse more often meant 'to sink', 'to drown' or 'to perish'". Similar ambiguities are there in Eliot's image: the brown god as rebirth, as dying or as a bringing back of the dead. See Cook, 'Fire and Spirit: Scripture's Shaping Presence in T. S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*' in *Literature and Theology*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press), (To be published in 2002).

West and Eliot. Mystical imagery in Sackville-West is only likened —it does not emerge from — external reality: "I've sunk into an image [...] *As in* the waters of a stagnant moat"[62]. Compare also Sackville-West's lines: "Darkness is greater light, to those who see; / Solitude greater company to those / Who hear the immaterial voices; those / Who dare to be alone"[63] to Eliot's "... out of heart of light / And they were behind us, reflected in the pool". Between these lines there is a sense of haunting, of ghost-like presence. However, "immaterial voices" heard by those who "dare to be alone" stresses interiority without reference to outsideness as in Eliot's "they [...] reflected in the pool" (*FQ*, 190). In Eliot we glimpse disembodied voices or reflections — something extrinsic to the vision — as much as the sense of a mystical vision that can only be described in terms of negations.

Eliot's move between inner and outer, subject and object hovers between mystical revelation and more orthodox religious imagery. In Woolf, the religious element is missing. Instead, her writings are populated with objects and images ostensibly lacking in divine purpose. For instance, in 'A Sketch of the Past' Woolf gives a mystical description of emptying life into "a bowl that one fills and fills and fills"[64]. This is an object that recurs. My chapter on Woolf draws attention to a section from the novel in which Eleanor, one of the central characters, has a strange encounter with a "dog's bowl" (*TY*, 37) which merits retelling in the context of this chapter. Eleanor is weighted down by an incredible burden and descends into another life, another culture, another time: a place in which she "must carry her burden" (*TY*, 36). Raising her arms "as if she were carrying a pitcher, an earthenware pitcher on her head" (*TY*, 36), Eleanor descends into the past. But this is not her own past as she has lived it. Eleanor becomes steeped in a more primitive world that extends beyond her own lived life. As the moment passes, the heavy frame she carries dissolves and is transformed back into the rim of a bowl. Returning to the present moment,

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[62] Cited in Raitt, Vita and Virginia: The Work and Friendship of V. Sackville-West and Virginia Woolf, pp. 117-118.
[63] Cited in Raitt, Vita and Virginia: The Work and Friendship of V. Sackville-West and Virginia Woolf, pp. 117-118.
[64] Woolf, 'A Sketch of the Past' in Moments of Being: Unpublished Autobiographical Writings, p. 73.

Eleanor identifies "the dog's bowl" (*TY*, 37) which (like the pitcher) is full of water. The bowl is, however, (as in Woolf's mystical encounter) disturbed by an enigmatic substance, by "something yellow" (*TY*, 37) that Eleanor recognises as an "element of sulphur" (*TY*, 37). As already mentioned, sulphur is allotropic; its yellow exists in two or more physical forms. Focusing on this substance Eleanor's fixed state turns inwards and her being, like the sulphur, takes on allotropic characteristics. The burden of primitive woman is (both physically and metaphysically) her own inescapable burden that resides between the living and the dead. Just as Eliot's brown God *as burden* is similarly located in ancestral waters, so the sulphurous yellow points to another possible meaning: for the alchemists 'sulphur water' is also known as "*divine* water"[65].

In The Years, an allotropic yellow effects a movement in Eleanor between the living and the dead, between inner time and real time, personal and archaic memory. If the alchemists term for sulphur water has any foundation, then yellow also effects a movement in Woolf's novel between the secular and the divine. Woolf repeats this movement across time, space and memory, again in colour terms, at a point in the novel when Sara (another key character) confuses her own existence with that of the Greek heroine Antigone. This is acted out in her question: "in a yellow cloud came whirling — who? [...] Antigone?" (*TY*, 10-11) As discussed in my earlier chapter, Sara's 'yellow' that returns is another version of Eleanor's allotropic sulphurous yellow object. Like Eleanor's identification with primitive woman, Sara's *de facto* oblivion similarly extends back to the sense of a life lived in another body and takes place in an uncertain state, between being asleep and awake. The 'betweenness' that Woolf conjures in these shifting states returns us to the "semi-transparent yellow"[66] of her own, personal quasi-mystical experience: "I remember the dark; the lights"[67]. Suzanne Raitt reads Woolf's 'A Sketch of the Past' as a "mystic narrative [...] a private rhapsodic feeling that she experienced when she was a child"[68]. Raitt interprets the feeling as an act of memory. Woolf's image can, however, be read another way. The scene being

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[65] This reference is indebted to David Grossman, See Under: Love, trans. Betsy Rosenberg, (London: Vintage, 1989), p. 440.
[66] Woolf, 'A Sketch of the Past', in Moments of Being: Unpublished Autobiographical Writings, p. 74.
[67] Ibid., p. 74.
[68] Raitt, Vita and Virginia: The Work and Friendship of V. Sackville-West and Virginia Woolf, p. 130.

described is a scene from childhood. Woolf's feeling of "the purest ecstasy I can conceive"[69] is, on the other hand, not necessarily being recalled from memory but is a resultant ecstasy *in the moment of memory*. In other words, the ecstatic experiencing of this scene is present at the moment of writing. Woolf's "It is almost impossible that I should be here"[70] disrupts the flow of memory. There is the sense of an actual displacement across time, a movement through time and space in which the 'I' is thrown into question. At the moment of ecstasy Woolf writes: "I am hardly aware of myself [...] I am only the container of the feeling of ecstasy, of the feeling of rapture"[71]. Where Richardson projects such feeling (as I have argued earlier, the transcendental subject dissolved into the temporal landscape of its objects and thus transforming them via a particular relationship of thought to consciousness) Woolf 's subject becomes a timeless, empty vessel.

As in Woolf's first memory, for both Eleanor and Sara it is a yellow oblivion or yellow object that forges an identification with the sense of a life lived in another body in another time. As Eliot's "lotos" (*FQ*, 190) references the Old World and North America and early events in Christian history, so Woolf's images extend beyond individual memory traces into a more archaic set of relations.

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[69] Woolf, 'A Sketch of the Past', in Moments of Being: Unpublished Autobiographical Writings, p. 73.
[70] Ibid., p. 73.
[71] Ibid., p. 74.

Mysticism and orthodox faith

According to Don Cupitt, mysticism as a concept in the late Modern period can be thought as "a possibly universal essence of religion"[72]. Like Beckett, Cupitt uses the term 'essence' to introduce an element of spirituality as that which lies beyond the strict practices or particularity of orthodox religious ritual. It is with Cupitt's term in mind that I want to set Beckett's call to "*essence*" (*PD*, 75) — extratemporal in terms of art and incommunicable in respect to the subject — alongside a model of *essence* offered by Freud in his preface to the Hebrew translation of *Totem and Taboo.*

Freud writes:

> No reader of [the Hebrew version of] this book will find it easy to put himself in the emotional position of an author who is ignorant of the language of holy writ, who is completely estranged from the religion of his fathers — as well as from every other religion — and who cannot take a share in nationalist ideals, but who has never yet repudiated his people, who feels that he is in his essential nature a Jew and who has no desire to alter that nature[73]

He continues:

> If the question were put to him: 'Since you have abandoned all these common characteristics of your countrymen, what is there left to you that is Jewish?' he would reply: 'A very great deal, and probably *its very essence'*. He could not now express that essence clearly in words; but some day, no doubt, it will become accessible to the scientific mind[74] (*my emphasis*)

The key element that occupies Freud's preface is the expression, or its impossibility, of an *essence* that does not rely for its definition on orthodox practice, national identity, language. Freud's question bears the weight of a struggle to confirm, and to reveal, something about his essential nature as a Jew. Linked to questions of time, memory, belonging, this is an *essence* that is reached

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[72] Don Cupitt, Mysticism After Modernity, (Oxford & Massachusetts: Blackwell, 1998), p. 26.
[73] Sigmund Freud, 'Preface to the Hebrew Translation' of *Totem and Taboo* in PFL 13: The Origins of Religion, trans. James Strachey, (London: Penguin, 1985), p. 51.
[74] Ibid., p. 51.

via a 'negative way', an 'emptying out': Freud is stripped of the language of holy writ, the religion of his fathers, nationalist ideals. Seemingly crucial for Freud is that the *essence* which remains cannot be expressed 'clearly in words'. Freud puts his faith in the future and in science to reveal. He subtracts an *essence* from Judaism and celebrates its vitality in secular life. While the form that this subtracted element might take is uncertain, Freud's process of 'emptying out' nevertheless generates a positive sedimentation — the *essence* of which he speaks is grounded in a purposeful existence. Freud's problem is how this might be articulated in language. In a letter written by Freud to the Vienna lodge of B'nai Brith, the context of his preface to 'Totem and Taboo' slightly shifts. He writes: "What bound me to Judaism was … not the faith, not even the national pride … there remained *enough over* to make the attraction of Judaism and the Jews irresistible, many *dark* emotional powers all the more powerful the less they could be expressed in words, as well as the clear consciousness of an *inner identity*"[75]. In this statement, inner identity unites with ancestral inheritance. The 'dark' power of lineage and belonging, confronted by inner identity, culminates in Freud's sense of an *essence* that defies definition and brings us back to Beckett's "incommunicable essence of oneself" (*PD*, 65). At the same time, Freud's *essence* would appear to hint at a mystical experience something like the one that Beckett describes.

The language used by Freud resonates with crucial themes under discussion in this chapter: inexpressibility; inner identity. In the preface he describes essence as unavailable to language ("He could not now express that essence clearly in words"[76]). In the letter to B'nai Brith there is a transformation that draws inexpressibility into more visual terminology: "there remained enough over [...] *dark* emotional powers"[77]. Here, inexpressibility looks more like that which is not clearly visible. Beckett demands participation between "imagination and direct apprehension" (*PD*, 74), between the "imaginative" (*PD*, 75) and the "empirical" (*PD*, 75), between an "evocation" (*PD*, 75) and "direct perception" (*PD*, 75). Where this leads for Beckett is to the sense of an "*essence*" (*PD*, 75) — described as "real without being merely actual" (*PD*,

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[75] Cited in Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, Freud's Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable, (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1991), p. 12.
[76] Freud, 'Preface to the Hebrew Translation' of *Totem and Taboo*, PFL 13: The Origins of Religion, p. 51.
[77] Cited in Yerushalmi, Freud's Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable, p. 12.

75). It is this moment that constitutes Beckett's "mystical experience" (*PD*, 75) and consequently holds potential to communicate "an extratemporal essence" (*PD*, 75). Freud cites *essence* as that which cannot be expressed clearly in words. It is what is left over when orthodox practice — be it religious, political or otherwise — is stripped away. However, if Freud (like Woolf, Richardson, Beckett) asserts an *essence* that negates religion and nationalist ideals, what might be the effect if religion and nationalist ideals are held firmly in place? What might *essence* look like on these terms?

Against Freud's negation of religion and nationalist ideals — a position that is close to Woolf, Beckett and, to some extent, Richardson — Eliot's writings take an alternative route to what could be seen as the same point. Eliot's writings offer a model that in some way reveals what Freud's essence might look like if religion and nationalist ideals are less negotiable or removable. A 'negative way' or form of 'emptying out' can be seen to forge a link between Woolf, Richardson, Beckett and Eliot and offers a way to draw out the parallels between Orthodox faith and mysticism as it plays out among these writers as a form of aesthetic 'enlightenment'. The negative form of renunciation found in Woolf, Richardson and Beckett contrasts with the affirmative orthodoxy of Eliot. Yet, Eliot's Anglo-Catholicism is likewise disturbed by the enigmatic God of negative theology. Much of Eliot's poetry emphasises the recurrent themes found in mystical narratives: silence, stillness and finding light in dark. Just as mysticism seeps into every major religious tradition as that which "speaks in *visual* terms about the Invisible"[78], so Eliot expresses as much in the language of light and dark, claiming that one of the frequent characteristics of Christian mysticism has been "a use of various imageries of light and darkness, sometimes indeed of a light which is at the same time darkness"[79]. In *Four Quartets*, a poem rich in mystical sources, Eliot writes:

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[78] Don Cupitt, Mysticism After Modernity, (Oxford UK & Cambridge USA: Blackwell, 1998), p. 26.
[79] T. S. Eliot, 'Mystic and Politician as Poet: Vaughan, Traherne, Marvell and Milton', *Listener*, III.64 (2 April, 1930), p. 590. Cited in Paul Murray, T. S. Eliot & Mysticism, p. 96.

dark dark dark. They all go into the dark …
I said to my soul, *be still*, and let the dark come upon you
Which shall be the darkness of God …
I said to my soul, *be still*, and wait without hope …
Wait without thought, for you are not ready for thought:
So the darkness shall be the light, and the stillness …
In order to arrive at what you are not
You must go through the way in which you are not [*FQ*, 199-201]

These lines enact a process of negation or 'emptying out'. However, rather than Freud's engagement with orthodoxy, national identity, language, Eliot's form of negation in *Four Quartets* is more intimately subjective: "without hope" (*FQ*, 200), "without thought" (*FQ*, 200), "the way in which you are not" (*FQ*, 201). Following in the tradition of the mystic St John of the Cross and the 'Inner Dark', Eliot writes that 'the darkness shall be the light'.[80] Links can be drawn here to Freud's sense of an essence that is inexpressible yet calls up what he describes as "*dark* emotional powers"[81]. For both Freud and Eliot darkness acts as a metaphor for the essence they are trying to articulate.

The opposition of light and dark are common metaphors for religious and mystical experience. In Pilgrimage Miriam Henderson turns to the Quaker faith and its central belief in the doctrine of the 'Inner Light'. Again, in similar language to Eliot's lines, Henderson sums up Quaker enlightenment as "Be still and *know*" (IV, 498). It is at such moments that Richardson's protagonist finds herself "in the presence of God" [IV, 498]. This is a God that is rooted in the spiritual inwardness stressed by William James as what makes Quakerism a "religion of veracity"[82]. A divine essence is made possible for everyday experience that both fulfils the Quaker's remoteness: "always [...] drawn away into the depths of the spirit" [IV, 491] whilst also visible on the surface through the potential of Henderson's *golden* consciousness as it transforms the modern urban landscape. As discussed earlier, light in Pilgrimage has transformative potential

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[80] The mystical way references an inner light shrouded in darkness: God is "*dark* night to the soul". This is generally acknowledged to mean, however, not the absence of light but rather the plenitude of light that is God's presence — a light so dazzling that it appears, temporarily, to blind the eye so that the soul is able to see nothing but darkness. See Paul Murray, T. S. Eliot & Mysticism, pp. 95-96.
[81] Cited in Yerushalmi, Freud's Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable, p. 12.
[82] William James, The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature, (London: Penguin, 1982; first publ. 1902), p. 7.

in that Richardson gives it colour. Miriam talks of "the strange new light [that] flowed back into herself" (*P*, 153). There are innumerable references to the "golden light" (IV, 157; 188; 221) that is dependant on an act of Miriam's consciousness: "golden light, and its way of making its outer world conform to its inner. Something of heaven" (*P*, IV, 157). Imagery of light and dark is also much discussed by critics of Beckett. As I discuss earlier, recall Beckett's Murphy: "there was no dark quite like his own dark" (*M*, 54). Referred to as his "really yellow spot" (*M*, 54) — a colour normally associated with light — this is a spot that offers a means to light the inner dark discussed by Eliot and St John of the Cross. Again, Beckett couples darkness with stillness or silence. Throughout Beckett's writings, silence is coupled with a hiddenness that could be attributed to the hiddenness of God (although secular interpretations of 'Waiting for Godot' often assume that Godot's failure to appear indicates a non-existence rather than hiddenness). To cite one of many examples, a mystical experience is related in 'Stirrings Still' and takes place in the language of light and dark: "One night as he sat at his table head on hands he saw himself rise and go [...] when his own light went out he was not left in the dark [....] such silence"[83]. Again, this is close to the mystical language found in Woolf: "seeing this light" behind "a yellow *blind* [...] the purest ecstasy I can conceive"[84].

Beyond Freud's expression of "dark emotional powers"[85], the essence that he subtracts from Judaism offers a further point of dialogue with a preface written by Eliot in the 1950s where he says: "the ultimate and esoteric truth is one, that all religions show some traces of it, and that is a matter of indifference to which one of the great religions we adhere"[86]. In a like manner to Freud, there is a sense here that something more than orthodox practice is at stake and which comes closer to Cupitt's definition of mysticism as "a possibly universal essence of religion"[87]. Where Freud finds universal estrangement, Eliot, on the other hand *unites* religions in a 'oneness'

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[83] Samuel Beckett, 'Stirrings Still' in The Complete Short Prose 1929-1989, p. 259. Beckett's title, 'Stirrings Still', is itself an oxymoron in terms of movement that works in a similar way to the theme of light in dark.
[84] Woolf, 'A Sketch of the Past' in Moments of Being: Unpublished Autobiographical Writings, p. 73.
[85] Cited in Yerushalmi, Freud's Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable, p. 12.
[86] Eliot's preface to Simone Weil's The Need For Roots, (1952), p. ix; cited in Murray, T. S. Eliot and Mysticism: The Secret History of Four Quartets, p. 128.
[87] Don Cupitt, Mysticism After Modernity, p. 26.

or *essence*. Freud speaks of estrangement from the religion of his fathers "as well as from every other religion"[88]. He rejects Judaism but keeps intact something that belongs to it. Where Freud subtracts an essence from Judaism, Eliot takes something from all religions. Eliot embraces Anglo-Catholicism but disperses its *essence* into religion in general. It is in this way, between the contrast of faith and secularity, between Eliot's orthodoxy as a *uniting* of religions and the *essence* that Freud subtracts from Judaism, that a philosophical approach to self and thought —one that is not just psychological or spiritual — can be seen to emerge.

Yosef Yerushalmi, a Professor of Jewish studies, analyses Freud's Jewishness in the context of faith versus secularity as it is bound up with the relation of Freud to his father. In his book Freud's Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable, Yerushalmi traces Freud's 'emptying out' as the process of a necessary rejection of the father (both his familial father and the father of Monotheism). It is the "very violence of Freud's recoil against Jewish religious belief and ritual"[89], Yerushalmi writes, that arouses his deepest suspicions: "It displays an aggressive intensity that normally accompanies a rebellion against an equally intense former attachment"[90]. The writing of Moses and Monotheism so late in his career, according to Yerushalmi, is an act of deferred obedience to the father. Yerushalmi sets the story thus: on Freud's 35th birthday his father, Jakob Freud, presents him with the gift of a rebound Philippsohn Bible (the kind that Sigmund had studied in childhood). Inside is a Hebrew inscription that appeals to Sigmund to return to his reading of the Book. Yerushalmi traces the implications of his father's wording as a way to problematise Freud's claims of i) not knowing Hebrew; ii) lack of Judaic familial tradition and practice; and iii) inadequate Jewish education. Despite these obstacles, in the preface to 'Totem and Taboo' Freud enigmatically holds on to an *essence* of Jewishness. In Yerushalmi's book, this is summarised as "the survival of the most triumphant vital elements of the past as the truest possession in the present, despite all the destructive elements and counter-forces they have

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[88] Freud, 'Preface to the Hebrew Translation' of *Totem and Taboo*, PFL 13: The Origins of Religion, p. 51.
[89] Yerushalmi, Freud's Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable, p. 68.
[90] Yerushalmi, Freud's Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable, p. 68.

endured"[91]. Freud's 'emptying out' to leave behind an *essence* of Jewishness is an act of deferred obedience in which "noble and precious elements return despite long intermixture"[92]. The 'return of the repressed', Yerushalmi writes, is "for the sake of new insight, as a result of which we do not have to deny our fathers but can at least attempt to reestablish our relationship on a different plane"[93]. The essence of the inscription "is a call for Sigmund's return and reconciliation"[94] to which, through the writing of Moses and Monotheism, he eventually obeys.

Freud's story, as Yerushalmi tells it, is interesting to compare to Eliot's writing of *Four Quartets* (similarly late in his career) as a work that, it could be said, seeks to 'repair' the faithless world so often found in Eliot's writings. As is well known, Eliot was born into a well-established American Unitarian family. Rejecting the faith of his forefathers, and his national identity as an American, Eliot relocates himself within English culture and converts to Anglo-Catholicism. In 1927 Eliot joined the Church of England and, in the same year, exchanged American for British nationality (sponsored by Leonard Woolf[95]). Eliot's conversion to Anglo-Catholicism, however, cannot be divorced from other religious and philosophical influences — his rejection of Unitarianism, his anti-Semitism and studies in Eastern philosophy and Buddhism. It is from all of these influences that Eliot's *essence* or 'oneness' can be seen to emerge. In other words, his uniting of religions includes those which he passionately rejects. This is a case in point for Eliot scholars. I. A Richards has said that Eliot "effected a complete severance between his poetry and all beliefs"[96]. In response, Michael Levenson claims that "we might just as well see him as implicated in all belief"[97]. My reading concurs with Levenson. Based on Yerushalmi's reading of Freud, the belief systems that Eliot passionately rejects suggest "an equally former attachment"[98] to which, through a process of dissemination, Eliot does not have to entirely let go. This is

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[91] This is a response to Freud's work by Lou Andreas-Salomé, cited in Yerushalmi, Freud's Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable, p. 78.
[92] This is a response to Freud's work by Lou Andreas-Salomé, cited in Yerushalmi, Freud's Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable, p. 78.
[93] Yerushalmi, Freud's Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable, p. 79.
[94] Ibid., p. 73.
[95] This point is identified in Gordon's biography of Eliot, T. S. Eliot: An Imperfect Life, p. 223.
[96] See Levenson, A Genealogy of Modernism, p. 202.
[97] Ibid., p. 202.
[98] Yerushalmi, Freud's Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable, p. 68.

strikingly resonant in a statement in which Eliot unites Judaism with Unitarianism: "The Jewish religion is unfortunately not a very portable one and shorn of its traditional practices, observances and Messianism, it tends to become a mild and colourless form of Unitarianism"[99]. What element, it could be asked, is taken away from religion that leaves it colourless? What does it mean to *colour* religion or to render it 'colourless'? Can one religion negate the particularity of another in the way that Eliot suggests?

It should not go unnoticed that of the comparisons Eliot could make, he sets Judaism against Unitarianism — two religions that he specifically rejects: "The Jewish religion [...] a mild and colourless form of Unitarianism"[100]. Further, the elements that Eliot strips away to reveal a 'colourless form of Unitarianism' are precisely those elements which, on Freud's model, would leave behind its very *essence*. Arguably, here, Eliot is suggesting a form of spirituality that crosses religious divides and different orthodox practices. In what follows, I will show that the 'Brown God' of Eliot's *Four Quartets* makes this position visible. The image draws not only on the mystical elements of *Four Quartets* but includes within it Eliot's orthodoxy. Further, this hue — as visualisation of a spirituality steeped in orthodox practice — can be seen to emerge much earlier in *The Waste Land* with the effect of allowing the reader to rethink — or revisualise — the spiritual barrenness so often associated with Eliot's early work.[101] From here, I will argue, links can be drawn with Freud's notion of an *essence* and, then, to the colouring of spirituality in my

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[99] Gordon, T. S. Eliot: An Imperfect Life, p. 19.

[100] Ibid., p. 19.

[101] In an article published in *Literature & Theology* in 1996, Cornelia Cook writes of the theological link, or leap, from *The Waste Land* (1922) to *Four Quartets* (1935-42). She begins with the seemingly contradictory position taken up by Eliot between these two works: Eliot as the creator of "one of the most significant twentieth-century images of a world without faith and without God in *The Waste Land*" while at the same time author of "perhaps the most impressive twentieth-century religious poem, *Four Quartets*". Cook writes that in *The Waste Land* "there is a painful absence of vision, a desire to a hidden apocalypse, a spiritual dimension which is conspicuous by its absence". *The Waste Land* is a poem of the modern world and especially of the cosmopolitan city. Generally thought to depict a barren, sterile earth, Cook's reading of *The Waste Land* sees a place of no hope of redemption. Recognising in the poem a "hidden but pervasive" desire for apocalypse that was characteristic of Eliot's early poetry, Cook nevertheless sees apocalyptic thought not as atheistic but as a particular scriptural model that is inseparable from the modernist's general discomfort in history or "desire to be rescued" from history. See Cornelia Cook, 'The Hidden Apocalypse: T. S. Eliot's Early Work, in *Literature and Theology,* Vol 10, No. 1, March 1996, (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

other chosen writers. Brown is a hue that contains within it all other hues. In Eliot, brown as spirituality 'made visible' allows a space in which religious doctrine sits alongside a more mystical vision in which personal and archaic memory reside. The *extratemporal essence* that constitutes mystical experience for Beckett, similarly recognisable in Woolf and Richardson as a quest to locate an enigmatic element to selfhood, can be drawn out in Eliot as containing within it the orthodox model of *essence* recognised by Yerushalmi: as an act of deferred obedience in which "noble and precious elements return despite long intermixture"[102]. By allowing links to be made between spirituality and personal/cultural memory — which, as I see it, leads in turn to the realm of the imagination — Yerushalmi's reading offers a point of dialogue with my reading of Eliot.

It is well known that Eliot sought to rid himself of familial history and his father's lifelong support of the Unitarian Church and its links with Judaism[103]. It is at this historical juncture, Cornelia Cook writes, that Eliot's echoes of "a 'disowned' (religious) history and the lexis of a forgotten belief"[104] collide with the scriptural modes of his poetry. The more Orthodox destinations get drawn back into a web of personal and cultural memory through which Eliot enacts his own form of historical dispossession. Rejecting his American roots for an adopted Englishness, a sense of erasure, or of the burial of the past, nevertheless haunts his poetry. Despite Eliot's rejection of his American roots, the American element does not go away. In her biography of Eliot, Lyndall Gordon stresses as much: "The English served Eliot as the lost tribes, as the Indians had served the religious energies of the Puritans [...] If Eliot's mask enacted England, his *inbent eye* recalled the New England divines"[105]. To look within is to look to his American ancestry and religious traditions. Again, in a review of Eliot's *Poems 1909-1925* Edmund Wilson stresses an inner turmoil that is related to Eliot's Americanism and which will

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[102] Yerushalmi, Freud's Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable, p. 78.
[103] Eliot regards himself as brought up "outside the Christian Fold" (Gordon, T. S. Eliot: An Imperfect Life, p. 19) and fiercely rejects the easy association of 'free-thinking' Jews and Unitarians recalled from his youth. According to Anthony Julius, a fierce critic of Eliot's anti-Semitism, the pairing of Unitarianism and Judaism is historically located. Unitarians developed strong links with American Jewry and, throughout the 19th century, many Jews were active in the Unitarian Church, the theological link between the two being the common denial of Christ's divinity.
[104] Cook, 'Fire and Spirit: Scripture's Shaping Presence in T. S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*', to be published in *Literature & Theology* in 2002.
[105] Gordon, T. S. Eliot: An Imperfect Life, p. 227.

not go away. He writes that Eliot's "real significance is less that of a prophet of European disintegration than of a poet of the American Puritan temperament [...] The settings are English, but the disturbed and haunted sense of the past is American"[106]. In a more specific context, Gordon writes: "Despite [...] his adoption of English religion, manners and clothes, and despite his marriages to English women, his poetry led him back to 'the source of the longest river'"[107]. Of course, in 'The Dry Salvages' we can see this return played out: "... the river / Is a strong brown god [...] The river is within us" (*FQ*, 205). Throughout Eliot's poetry the river is constantly referred to as a site of memory, flooding Eliot's cultural memory with a more archaic and corporeal sense of belonging. In *Four Quartets*, the river is the dwelling place of god:

> I do not know much about gods; but I think that the river
> Is a strong brown god — sullen, untamed and intractable
> Patient to some degree, at first recognised as a frontier;
> Useful, untrustworthy, as a conveyor of commerce;
> Then only a problem confronting the builder of bridges.
> The problem once solved, the brown god is almost forgotten
> By the dwellers in cities — ever, however, implacable.
> Keeping his seasons and rages, destroyer, reminder
> Of what men choose to forget ... (*FQ*, 205)

This is the opening of *Dry Salvages*, the third section of *Four Quartets*, named after a small group of rocks off the coast of Cape Ann, Massachusetts. The *Dry Salvages* contains a geographical ambivalence that establishes a link between Eliot's adopted London — as a site of modernity and forgetting ("... the river [.../...] brown god [...] almost forgotten / By the dwellers in cities [.../...] what men choose to forget" (*FQ*, 205)) — and Eliot's childhood home on the Mississippi river. The brown god of *Four Quartets* hints at a relocation back to points of origin. The river as brown god — or god as brown river — is "at first recognised as a frontier" (*FQ*, 205), as if the stakes of Eliot's national identity were being played out. If his American roots can be covered over by adopting the manners and practices of an Englishman, it is only in London by "the dwellers in cities" (*FQ*, 205) that this form of 'forgetting' is valid. Brown is the link here between a site of remembrance, the Mississippi of Eliot's formative years, and a site of forgetting

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[106] Cited in Gordon, T. S. Eliot: An Imperfect Life, p. 487.
[107] Gordon, T. S. Eliot: An Imperfect Life, p. 535.

brought about through the adopted culture and London landscape of his adult life[108]. London as a site of forgetting is made visible in a similar brown hue in 'The Burial of the Dead', the first section of *The Waste Land*: "Unreal City, / Under the brown fog of a winter dawn"[109]. Again, in 'The Fire Sermon' (the third section of *The Waste Land*): " ... The wind / Crosses the brown land, unheard [...] Unreal City / Under the brown fog of a winter noon" (*WL*, 70). In 'What the Thunder said' (the fifth section) Eliot conjures an image of "the third who walks always beside you" (*WL*, 77), a figure that is "brown mantle, hooded" (*WL*, 77) and stalks Eliot's 'Unreal' cities.

If, as we are told in *Four Quartets*, the "brown god is almost forgotten by the dwellers in cities [...] reminder of what men choose to forget" (*FQ*, 205), then in the context of *The Waste Land*, the *brown* fog is not invisibility or total oblivion but something more like Eliot's own acting out of "what men *choose* to forget" (*FQ*, 205). A link can thus be made between the two poems: the all-pervading atmosphere of Eliot's adopted city starts to hint at an archaic memory that has not gone away, made visible in the brown hue that haunts both works (again there are very strong links here with the themes discussed in Woolf). The "brown fog" (*WL*, 71) and the "brown land" (*WL*, 70) of Eliot's inherited England depicted in *The Waste Land* turns back into the *brown* waters of his ancestral dwelling place, the brown hooded "third" (*WL*, 77) of *The Waste Land* into the brown "god" (*FQ*, 205) of the Mississippi. Toni Morrison writes of the power of the Mississippi with a similar sensitivity to archaic memory and its role in the creative imagination:

> You know, they straightened out the Mississippi River in places, to make room for houses and liveable acreage. Occasionally the river floods these places. 'Floods' is the word they use, but in fact it's not flooding, it's remembering. Remembering where it used to be. All water has a perfect memory and is forever trying to get back to where it was. Writers are like that: remembering where we were... And a rush of the imagination is our 'flooding'[110]

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[108] Recall, Woolf's "Brown" as it sets in motion a means of transit between Woolf's impression of "one of those" old ladies, endlessly displaced, and the modulations or sensations of the woman's character, an *essence* that cannot be known but cannot be subordinated. Woolf's sketch of an elusive (while ostensibly familiar) character dispels the myth of a 'knowable' essence of an old lady sitting in the corner of a train carriage. The form of 'forgetting' that Eliot witnesses in metropolitan life is denied: the old lady continues her journey with all her mystery intact.

[109] T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land* in T. S. Eliot: Collected Poems: 1909-1962, (London & Boston: Faber and Faber, 1963), p. 65; (hereafter cited *WL*).

[110] Morrison, Out There — Marginalisation and Contemporary Culture, p. 305. Cited in Rogoff, Terra Infirma: Geography's Visual Culture, p. 109.

This is an extract from Morrison's 'The Site of Memory' where she discusses writing and autobiography, insisting that the act of imaginative writing is always bound up with memory. Morrison focuses on the theme of return. On the one hand, the image she conjures is a bodily one — a body of water involved in an attempt to reform itself into the imprint it once left upon the land. On the other hand, Morrison's image has an unmistakable mystical element and conjures the idea that 'water has perfect memory': a yearning or memory is displaced and relocated onto the body of the river. The landscape of Eliot's poetry, likewise, links a bodily siting of memory with more mystical elements. Eliot's poetry is suffused with a sense of forgetting, of the forgotten, and of what it might mean to dwell in a place where forgetting is commonplace: the "brown god is almost forgotten by the dwellers in cities [...] reminder of what men choose to forget" (*FQ*, 205). Poetry is the site of Eliot's erasure, of what he has had to (re)create in order that his adopted landscape might present to him the face that it does. Yet, this face betrays the signs of contestation and struggle between rival myths and disparate memories. If Eliot's London allows him to forget his American roots then it is here, also — as *The Waste Land* shows us — that man can to some extent forget God. In the context of Eliot's "brown god" (*FQ*, 205), a body made visible, we might see in this figure a displaced body that relocates itself as a diasporic homecoming of the imagination — as a ghost, or phantom of Eliot's past location. At the same time, what this image can be seen to present is a mystical (re)experiencing of the God laid waste in Eliot's early poetry. Figured in these terms, Eliot's 'brown god' raises the following question: if brown is a form of 'layering' of all other colours, then what are the layers of the self that have to be got rid of onto — or can be seen as condensed into — an object such as this? Between the closeness of images I have described what can be seen to be taking place is a political transformation into a more recognisable 'face' of God.

Compare the imagery of *The Waste Land*:

Who is the third who walks always beside you?
When I count, there are only you and I together
But when I look ahead up the white road
There is always another one walking beside you
Gliding *wrapt in a brown mantle*, hooded
I do not know whether a man or a woman
— But who is that on the other side of you? *(WL*, 77; *my emphasis)*

In these lines there are striking parallels with an image that Eliot conjures in *Four Quartets*:

> I caught the sudden look of some dead master
> Whom I had known, forgotten, half recalled
> Both one and many; in the *brown baked* features
> The eyes of a familiar compound ghost
> Both intimate and unidentifiable (*FQ*, 217; *my emphasis*)

There is an unmistakable suggestion that the vision conjured here — "some dead master [...] in the brown baked features [...] ghost both intimate and unidentifiable" (*FQ*, 217) — is the same "third who walks always beside you [...] wrapt in a brown mantle, hooded" (*WL*, 77) from *The Waste Land*. In both works a sense of forgetting is linked to a phantom-like presence, to a "familiar compound ghost" (*FQ*, 217) that haunts both poems and is made visible in a brown hue. In both figures there is the presence of something familiar yet unknown. The "brown mantle, hooded" (*WL*, 77) third of *The Waste Land* and the "brown baked features [...] of a familiar compound ghost" (*FQ*, 217) in *Four Quartets* are strikingly similar but not clearly visible *as god*. In contrast, the stated 'brown god' of *Four Quartets* can be seen to contain the "dead master" (*FQ*, 217) known, forgotten, "one and many" (*FQ*, 217) and conjures the image of a god that has many faces, brought together and seen as one in the "brown baked features" (*FQ*, 217).

Similarly, Eliot's "third who walks always beside you [...] wrapt in a brown mantle, hooded" (*WL*, 77) is singular and yet strangely reminiscent of archaic memory. We can see this image again as it extends into the landscape haunted by the 'hooded' figure or figures (god or gods) of *The Waste Land*:

> ... Who are those hooded hordes swarming
> Over endless plains, stumbling in cracked earth
> ... Falling towers
> Jerusalem Athens Alexandria
> Vienna London
>
> Unreal (*WL*, 77)

Like the brown fog of *The Waste Land* that both exposes and covers over the stated 'Unreal' city, so the effigy in a brown mantle that stalks *The Waste Land* is, similarly, 'unreal'[111]. If the city is unreal *because* in a brown shroud, then it is interesting that this is the hue in which Eliot makes direct reference to God. Again, reminiscent of Freud's preface to 'Totem and Taboo', divinity takes up a place internally, as if for Eliot this were one psychic solution to the *wasting* of divinity he is creating in this poem. From an image of the river as a strong brown god — or god as brown river — the image of a presence outside of the self shifts into a presence more commonly associated with the play of memory and remembrance: "The river is within us" (*FQ*, 205). The brown god is within.

If there is a conflict between Eliot's mystical yearnings and the Orthodox faith that he practices then, in the context of Eliot's 'brown god', it could be asked: is the image an exterior one (in the way that Anglo-Catholicism creates and worships icons) or concretisation of memory in an exterior place, whether bodily form or a phantom-like presence? In other words, is Eliot's brown god 'visionary experience' or its failure? If we return to Eliot's lines from 'Little Gidding' (the final section of *Four Quartets*): "I caught the look of some dead master / Whom I had known, forgotten, half recalled / Both one and many; in the *brown baked* features / The eyes of a familiar compound ghost" (*FQ*, 217), then another question presents itself: are we looking at a dead god, a drowned god, a god that is in some way being brought back to life? Put another way, is Eliot's religious conversion a renewal — a memory, in Morrison's phrase — in itself?

The work of Michael Levenson in his Genealogy of Modernism pays much attention to the

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[111] Michael Levenson in A Genealogy of Modernism writes of the first section of this stanza ("Who is the third who walks always beside you" as the risen Christ appearing to the disciples who fail to recognise him and the second section ("hooded hordes swarming / Over endless plains") as an evocation of the Russian revolution. See Levenson, pp. 199-200. Levenson also draws attention to one of Eliot's notes that points out that the Buddha's Fire Sermon "corresponds importance" to the Sermon on the Mount. Eliot explains his use of "The Hanged Man" from the Tarot deck: " The Hanged Man, a member of the traditional pack, fits my purpose in two ways: because he is associated in my mind with the Hanged God of Frazer, and because I associate him with the hooded figure in the passage of the disciples to Emmaus in Part v." (See Levenson, pp. 202-203.)

theme of death in Eliot's poetry. The opening of *The Waste Land*, Levenson writes, "looks at spring from the point of view of a corpse"[112]. The eye sees here "from the point of view of someone (or some thing) that is buried"[113]. This is a corpse "that has not died [...] These buried are not yet dead"[114]. On the theme of resurrection, Levenson draws attention to Frazer (upon whom Eliot relied heavily) and the cyclical repetition of life as the personification of a god "who annually died and rose again from the dead"[115]. The opening and closing lines to 'The Burial of the Dead' witness the sprouting of a corpse: "a buried corpse planted in order to grow"[116]. As Levenson reminds us, Frazer describes a number of myths that chronicle the return of the dead as wandering ghosts that haunt the living. Eliot himself was much preoccupied with this more chilling aspect of a return from the grave. The topos of the reviving god as a significant pattern associated with the rising of the dead is, for Levenson, a theme on which Eliot's writing depends. Levenson draws attention to the following cancelled lines from *The Waste Land*: "What is the wind doing? [...] Carrying / Away the little light dead people"[117]. These chilling lines should remind us that *The Waste Land* "is a kind of ghost story with protagonists both haunted and haunting"[118]. The image of a corpse that sprouts captures a startling ambiguity in the poem's opening movement standing "at the point where two powerful topoi converge: the reviving god and the wandering dead. A triumphant return to life is made to coincide with an inability to die [...] the fate of gods and the fate of ghosts, merge"[119].

It is perhaps with Levenson's sense of things in mind that Eliot discusses inward 'visions' in his philosophical essay, Knowledge and Experience. According to Eliot these visions, or shadows, may be only figments of imagination, or, according to Lyndall Gordon, can be thought as "plausible hallucinations"[120]. These are themes that I have introduced also in relation to my other

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[112] Levenson, A Genealogy of Modernism, p. 172.
[113] Ibid., p. 172.
[114] Ibid., p. 172.
[115] Cited in Levenson, A Genealogy of Modernism, p. 173.
[116] Levenson, A Genealogy of Modernism, p. 173.
[117] Ibid., p. 174.
[118] Ibid., p. 174.
[119] Ibid., p. 175.
[120] Gordon, T. S. Eliot: An Imperfect Life, p. 75.

writers — death, haunting, imagination versus something more like hallucination. Again, as I have drawn my analyses into a philosophical discussion of subject and object relations, so Eliot explores a notion of a 'half-object' which Gordon cites as a quasi-religious experience, an object that appears only to a mind floating free somewhere between subject and object. Just as I have explored comparable dynamics throughout this thesis, so — notably — Eliot writes of illusion, hallucination or superstition as deserving more serious philosophical attention than social or material objects. It is only when the visionary power fails, Eliot suggests,[121] that people resort to social and common knowledge[122].

Beckett's analyst, Wilfred Bion has done much work on hallucination. His model offers a way of rethinking Eliot's remarks in relation to images such as the 'brown God' under discussion. In his paper 'Attacks on Linking', Bion describes a patient who intuited a blue haze in the room one day and who, on the next day, intuited two shapes in the room that Bion refers to as 'probability clouds'[123]. Bion believed that the patient was hallucinating simply as a means of evacuating mental rubbish. However, in his later work and the introduction of what he terms the influence of 'O'[124], the haze and shapes that the patient describes can be refigured as the apprehension of a 'gap' that might have been idolised or iconicised. It is via Bion's model of hallucination, already to some extent introduced in my work on Beckett, that Eliot's "brown God" (*FQ*, 205) and "brown fog" (*WL*, 71) offer rich parallels with the evasive images discussed in my other writers. Setting divinity and its absence in a brown hue, Eliot to some extent closes the 'gap' between lack of faith and religious Orthodoxy that many critics identify in his work.

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[121] This discussion is indebted to Gordon, T. S. Eliot: An Imperfect Life, pp. 74-75.
[122] See Gordon, T. S. Eliot: An Imperfect Life, pp. 74-75.
[123] See Wilfred Bion, 'Attacks on Linking' in Second Thoughts: Selected Papers on Psychoanalysis, (London: Karnac Books, 1993).
[124] For a detailed discussion of Bion's work in this respect see Eric Rhode, On Hallucination, Intuition, and the Becoming of "O", (New York: Esf Publishers, 1998).

A few concluding remarks

Richardson writes that 'modern religious controversy is metaphysical' (*P*, III, 170). Arguing that science is a smaller kind of truth than philosophy, the 'real difficulty', she claims, "is not between science and religion" (*P*, III, 170) but "between religion and *philosophy*" (*P*, III, 170). As I have shown in this chapter, for each of my chosen writers religion — or more precisely, spirituality — moves within the realm of thought and philosophy rather than establishing a basis for scientific or orthodox belief. Eliot combines high Anglicanism with idealist philosophy. Influenced by the work of Francis H Bradley, Eliot confers with the notion that "Reality is One, a seamless and coherent whole which is non-relational"[125]. The poet develops Bradley's notion of the Absolute as that which holds together thought and reality, will and feeling in a sublime whole leading to a notion of the self that is definable only in terms of what is other. By combining scepticism or religious 'doubt' with idealism, Eliot recognises the limitations of ordinary knowledge and experience yet holds philosophically that when they are organised into a coherent whole, one can glimpse absolute truth. Such ideas contrast with Woolf, Richardson, Beckett. For Richardson, an 'absolute' self is essential to the fulfilment of a life, but a finite centre to self cannot be known.

Richardson's experimentation with aesthetic form and with ideas of an Absolute offers rich parallels with Eliot. Conjuring images of a disordered universe, Eliot's poetry asks whether we can solve the problem of disorder by making it the problem of a disordered self. His writing offers to the reader a kaleidoscopic confusion, a chaos of fragments. Like Richardson, Eliot offers a way to try to negotiate such fragments into some kind of (albeit submerged) unity. In Knowedge and Experience Eliot describes a finite centre as a "unity of consciousness"[126], a "universe in itself"[127]. According to Michael Levenson, Eliot insisted on something more complex than the self — his developing *system* of points of view extends beyond the ego; the human subject was neither primary nor ultimate; experience did not begin in the ego, nor did

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[125] Peter Ackroyd, T S Eliot, (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1984), p. 49.
[126] Levenson, A Genealogy of Modernism, p. 180.

judgement end there. It is from Eliot's sense of something more complex than the self that this chapter has drawn contrast and comparison with Richardson, Beckett and Woolf. Through the theme of colour, spirituality and orthodoxy can be seen to collide with personal and cultural memory with the result that a form of aesthetic enlightenment or visionary experience draws the self towards a transcendence that, in the last analysis, seeks authorisation within the poetic.

[127] Ibid., p. 180.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

In my last chapter I cite Freud's preface to the Hebrew translation of 'Totem and Taboo' in which he enacts a disavowal of national identity, orthodox faith and the language of his forefathers to leave an *essence* of Jewishness. Alongside Freud, I set Cupitt's notion that mysticism can be thought as "a possibly universal *essence* of religion"[1] and Beckett's sense of a "real and incommunicable *essence* of oneself" (*PD*, 65) — an "extratemporal *essence*" (*PD*, 75). For Freud, Cupitt and Beckett, essence is unrepresentable or incommunicable. Freud refutes language: "He could not now express that essence clearly in words"[2]. Cupitt's mysticism "speaks in *visual* terms about the Invisible"[3]. Beckett's 'incommunicable essence' of self is set in a complex relation to time. By way of conclusion, I want to draw the unrepresentable — as *essence* — back into the project of modernism in which each of my chosen writers is historically located.

Clement Greenberg describes the *essence* of modernism in the context of a desire for purity:

> The *essence* of Modernism lies, as I see it, in the use of the characteristic methods of a discipline to criticize the discipline itself — not in order to subvert it, but to entrench it more firmly in its area of competence ... "Purity" meant self-definition, and the enterprise of self-criticism in the arts became one of self-definition with a vengeance[4]

Philosopher Stanley Cavell critiques Greenberg's essentialism whilst pointing out that modernism is a particular moment of art's history in which art is laid bare: "a period in which each of the arts seems to be, even forced to be, drawing itself to its limits"[5]. Cavell sees modernism as involved

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[1] Don Cupitt, Mysticism After Modernity, (Oxford UK & Cambridge USA: Blackwell, 1998), p. 26.
[2] Freud, 'Preface to the Hebrew Translation' of *Totem and Taboo*, PFL 13: The Origins of Religion, p. 51.
[3] Ibid., p. 26.
[4] Clement Greenberg, 'Modernist Painting' in Forum Lectures, Voice of America, (Washington DC, 1960), cited in Charles Harrison, English Art and Modernism 1900-1939, (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1981), p. 349.
[5] Stanley Cavell, 'A Matter of Meaning It', cited in Art in Theory 1900-1990: An Anthology of Changing Ideas, (ed.) Charles Harrison & Paul Wood, (Oxford UK & Cambridge USA: Blackwell, 1996; first publ. 1992), p.782.

in an attempt to purge itself of elements which "seem arbitrary or extraneous"[6]. It has happened at a certain moment in history, as Cavell writes: "it was not always true of a given art that it sought to keep its medium pure, that it wished to assert its own limits, and therewith its independence of the other arts"[7]. Just as in the citation from Greenberg, 'essence' is used by Cavell in relation to the modernist agenda: "trying to find the limits or *essence* of its own procedures"[8].

Each of the writers considered in this thesis takes up a position in relation to what Cavell describes as modernism's attempt to find "the limits or essence" [9] of their own procedures. Each is involved in the manipulation of form. Woolf says as much in 'Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown': good writing should be "interested in things in themselves; in character in itself; in the book in itself [...] everything was inside the book, nothing outside" (*BB*, 77). Crucial to my thesis is that Woolf sets her agenda within a problematic of subject and object relations in which thought is mobilised visually: her sentences are involved in "referring each word to [her] vision, matching it as exactly as possible" (*BB*, 82). As I have already argued, Woolf's 'brown' is central in this dynamic and works to make visible the gap between thought and representation. Unlike the realists — and the subject of Woolf's critique — it is an 'unspeakable' aspect of Mrs Brown that is conjured visually, *as* brown. It is here, as I have argued, that the locus or *essence* of the modernist agenda in respect to form is made visible in each of my chosen writers — in the gap between thought and representation and how this leads to an unspeakable, or unrepresentable, aspect of thought and experience which nevertheless, through the kind of analysis of colour that I have done here, makes this gap visible *as* thought. Where this has led is to an analysis of selfhood and experience and the 'matter' of thought in which colour is a central dynamic.

As I have shown, colour has the power to compel the most difficult aspects of a personal history to the surface of writing. For each of my chosen writers, a visual and coloured aspect emerges in

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[6] Ibid., p.782.
[7] Ibid., p.782.
[8] Ibid., pp. 781-782.
[9] Ibid., pp. 781-782.

which traces of personal and cultural memory — the 'unspeakable' — challenges the notion that modernist writing can negotiate its own boundaries. However, this has led not only to the potentially psychological weight of colour. Colour's ambiguous role within the literary texts considered here offers a new way to explore the complexity of modernism's preoccupation with the relation of subject to object — and draws the question of essence into a debate on form, as Greenberg and Cavell describe it, as well as into an ontological and epistemological investigation of thinking and selfhood.

The central premise of this thesis has been to address the seeming impasse between thought and representation and the ways in which my chosen writers are involved in a philosophical investigation of subject and object relations. Through the theme of colour, I have argued that philosophical 'uncertainty' is made visible. As we have seen, an evanescence to 'thought made visible' brings to writing aspects of colour that even the visual cannot represent. My argument follows a pathway not only of the 'psychological' and the 'spiritual' but one of philosophical uncertainty in which colour is central. We have seen this in Richardson's monochromatic 'X' that moves from gold to yellow, Woolf's 'spirit' that goes by the name of Brown, Beckett's 'yellow spot' and Eliot's 'brown God'. As I state in my introduction, colour's ambiguous role within the writers considered here invites a complex dialogue of visual and text, form and content, subject and object. In this way, what emerges is a principle of uncertainty in the capacity of writing to evoke experience — a capacity that modernist writing contests but to which, as I have shown, it also adheres.

In my chapter on Woolf, I show how her use of colour displaces realist attempt at characterisation. Woolf stresses the need to 'look within'. Yet, as my reading of The Years has shown, inwardness is equally subjected to scrutiny. Woolf embraces the Post-Impressionist gap between character and its representation. As Kandinsky writes, Post-Impressionism seeks to show an inner light: "we are seeking the road which is to lead us away from the external to the

internal basis"[10]. My reading of The Years draws Woolf's concentration on inwardness, the stream-of-consciousness technique that we can see in her early writings, into a philosophical investigation of the borderline zone between inner and outer, subject and object. In this novel, we see a philosophical engagement with the theme of colour — and the philosophical uncertainty that colour activates — through which Woolf explores the relation of thought to experience.

In my chapter on Richardson, I explore a visual narrative through which Miriam Henderson's transformative consciousness can be seen to emerge. It is here, I have argued, that the way in which colour is set to work in Pilgrimage is not only central to Richardson's project for modernism and the woman writer but, further, is a critique of modernity. Richardson develops a relation of thought to consciousness in which intuitive thinking offers an authentic way of relating to self and other. Like Benjamin, Richardson offers a model of 'redemptive' thought that is activated and made visible through the theme of colour. We are given a vision of how life could be through the heuristic, transformative potential contained in the artwork.

Woolf's unspeakable and Richardson's inviolate element to selfhood activate a sense of unity between subject/object, inner/outer. As I explore in my chapter on Beckett, whereas a philosophical uncertainty is inherent within the activated sense of unity they describe, for Beckett, uncertainty is all there is. All that can be represented is the 'anxiety' that stems from the impossibility of any relation of subject/object, inner to outer. It is here that I refute Beckett's claim that he himself fails as an artist. Drawing on his writing on the work of the Van Veldes — the 'new object' that emerges in their work as anxiety made visible — I argue that anxiety is similarly made visible in Beckett's own writing as a coloured and hallucinatory quality to the writing in which threads of 'unrecognisable' memory and experience can be traced. As in Woolf and Richardson, the unspeakable, or unrepresentable, enters the frame of writing.

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[10] Kandinsky, Concerning the Spiritual in Art, p. 54.

The thread that links each of my chosen writers is the threat of the unspeakable or the unrepresentable. In a perhaps unanticipated finale to the thesis in which I link 'unrepresentability' and 'spirituality', colour's link to this last theme rebounds back on to the colour theorists cited in my introduction. Schefer's work seeks to construe what he calls the 'unknown centre of ourselves'. Like Schefer, I have not ended up at the idea of a hidden 'soul', or image, or memory that is being sought. Yet, unlike Schefer, my aim has not been to evolve a historical and ideological model in which the relation of viewer to viewed is drawn into the history of the viewing subject. Rather, I have followed a philosophical argument of uncertainty that governs this set of shifting relations among things seen, memory and experience. It is here, I argue, that the modernist preoccupation with the seeming impasse between thought and representation can, through the theme of colour, be seen to be 'made visible'. Colour offers a route into Cavell's notion of modernism's attempt to find "the limits or essence of its own procedures"[11]. However, in the way that colour also works to make visible the unspeakable, or unrepresentable, this thesis offers a critique of modernism which challenges the 'significant' form in which Fry and Bell see this 'limit' or 'essence' to be present.

In an essay on the painter, Karl Appel, Jean-Francois Lyotard problematises thought with specific relation to colour:

> The problem is that in painting, in matter,
> the Thing is called colour. What about me,
> says thought, how can I be matter?
> How can I be colour?
> Not: thinking colour. Nor the colour of thought.
> Thought as matter itself. It too must be colour
> because
> *there is therefore no opposition*
> *between spirit and matter*[12]

To link colour and thought in the way that Lyotard suggests is to pull the material existence of colour into uncertainty while at the same time establishing an (equally uncertain) materiality for

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[11] Cavell, 'A Matter of Meaning It', cited in Art in Theory 1900-1990, pp. 781-782.
[12] Jean-Francois Lyotard, 'Sans Appel', trans. David Macey, in 'Journal of Philosophy & the Visual Arts', (ed.) Andrew Benjamin, (London: Academy Editions, St Martin's Press, 1989), p. 8.

thought in which colour is central. On Lyotard's model, the common conception of thought as immaterial, and colour as matter, starts to evanesce. Based on Lyotard's logic, as he suggests, if thought can be matter then the reverse holds true for colour: colour is released into the incorporeal. This philosophical conundrum lies at the heart of colour's 'mischief' as I have traced it in each of my chosen writers. My concern throughout this thesis has been to investigate the significance of colour as a new way of thinking about self and about thought. A dialogue has emerged — one that is not just psychological or spiritual — but is rooted in ontological and epistemological doubt.

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